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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



March 2011

Vol. 116, No. 3

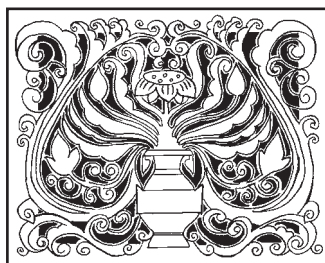


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Amrita Kalasha

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उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत । *Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!*



The Subtle Self

March 2011
Vol. 116, No. 3

तं दुर्दर्शं गूढमनुप्रविष्टं गुहाहितं गह्वरेष्ठं पुराणम् ।
अध्यात्मयोगाधिगमेन देवं मत्वा धीरो हर्षशोकौ जहाति ॥

The intelligent man gives up happiness and sorrow by developing concentration of mind on the Self and thereby meditating on the ancient Deity who is inscrutable, lodged inaccessibly, located in the intellect, and seated in the midst of misery (the body and senses, which are sources of misery).

(*Katha Upanishad*, 1.2.12)

यत्र नान्यत्पश्यति नान्यच्छृणोति नान्यद्विजानाति स भूमाथ
यत्रान्यत्पश्यत्यन्यच्छृणोत्यन्यद्विजानाति तदल्पं यो वै भूमा तदमृतमथ यदल्पं
तन्मर्त्यं स भगवः कस्मिन्नतिष्ठित इति स्वे महिम्नि यदि वा न महिम्नीति ॥

‘The Infinite is that where one does not see anything else, does not hear anything else, and does not understand anything else. Hence, the finite is that where one sees something else, hears something else, and understands something else. That which indeed is the Infinite, is immortal. On the other hand, that which is finite, is mortal.’ ‘O venerable sir, on what is That established?’ ‘In its own glory, or not even in Its own glory.’

(*Chhandogya Upanishad*, 7.2.4.1)

प्रतिबोधविदितं मतममृतत्वं हि विन्दते ।
आत्मना विन्दते वीर्यं विद्यया विन्दतेऽमृतम् ॥

It (Brahman) is really known when It is known with each state of consciousness, because thereby one gets immortality. (Since) through one’s own Self is acquired strength, (therefore) through knowledge is attained immortality.

(*Kena Upanishad*, 2.4)

THIS MONTH

Amnesia, which is both a boon and a bane, can be not just individual but cultural, racial, even global. Mercifully, the avatara descends once in a while to tell deluded humanity **The Most Ancient Story**.



Whoever touched even inadvertently Swami Vivekananda when he was in a high state of consciousness would have a profound experience. This happened to Mrs Carrie Wyckoff, one of the three Mead sisters, when Swamiji stayed in their

South Pasadena home. Pravrajika Brahmaprana of the Sarada Convent, Santa Barbara, writes about Mrs Wyckoff's transformation in **She Touched God: The Life of Sister Lalita**.

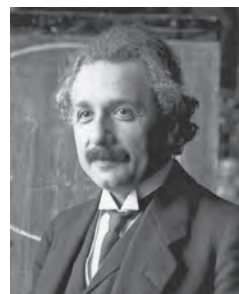
Ngakma Nor'dzin of Cardiff, Wales, beautifully articulates in **Relaxing into Meditation** the dynamics of meditation and how it brings wisdom, love, compassion, and kindness to the world. The author, herself an adept, teaches meditation internationally. Her methods and books are very popular. *Relaxing into Meditation* is one of her books.

Carl Jung, regarded as one of the great minds of the twentieth century, rejected psychoanalysis as inadequate to start Analytical Psychology. In **Carl Jung: Deconstructing the Reincarnation Myth**, Dr Pramila Davidson, former professor at McGill



University and Pune University, skilfully reveals Jung's mystical streak and his thoughts on reincarnation.

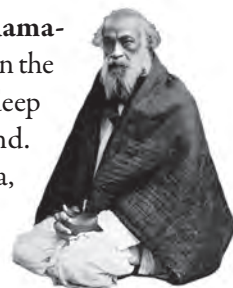
In **Albert Einstein: Scientific Genius and Mystic** Swami Atmajnanananda, of the Vedanta Society of Washington DC, uncovers the famous person's spirituality, humility, humanism, and renunciation.



Control of mind, a prerequisite for higher living, actually means freedom of the mind. Swami Ranganathananda, the thirteenth president of the Ramakrishna Order, lucidly explains how it can be accomplished in the second instalment of **Spiritual Training of the Mind**.

In the twelfth part of **Vedanta-sara** Swami Bhaskareswarananda, former President, Ramakrishna Math, Nagpur, shows that our conception of the world depends on conditioning. Knowing how the world has come from Brahman will break the limitations.

This concluding section of **Mahendranath Gupta: Last Days with Sri Ramakrishna** brings down the curtain on the avatara's saga on earth, leaving a deep impression on the reader's mind. The author, Swami Chetanananda, is Minister-in-Charge, Vedanta Society of St Louis.



The Most Ancient Story

CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY'S OBSESSION in trying to appear beautiful and young has crossed ridiculous limits and is now revolting. It is also paradoxical that billions are spent worldwide on this absurd pursuit while the poor, ailing, and uneducated are in desperate need of food, healthcare, and education. Decrepitude and disease is no doubt a burden to oneself and others, but a person's real attractiveness and wealth lies not in artificiality and artifice: character, knowledge, and wisdom are the true assets of any soul. This is what draws to oneself not just people but other living beings as well.

There is another bigger paradox: humans are very knowledgeable as a species, though very prone to forgetfulness. Nobody and nothing is young or old, but ancient. *Homo sapiens* have been around for about two hundred thousand years and have risen from preceding species till the earliest hominids emerged in Africa some three to four million years ago. These aeons stretching far back, apart from leaving a few traces in the fossils, are written inside each minute biological cell. This is the genetic code.

Another chapter of the human story is written in the very heart of the material that makes us—material that also comprises the beautiful and fragile earth, which is approximately four and a half billion years old. Humans are ancient, ancient as the seas, rocks, winds, and everything else in the world. There is nothing young and new here; humanity shares its existence with each blade of grass, each drop of water, each moving atom in this vast mind-reeling world

of the animate and the inanimate. This is also a forgotten story.

Another dimension of the same story that also lies in us and in everything around is that this ancient world has come from a still more ancient universe, which is approximately thirteen to sixteen billion years. The same stuff that makes the stars, supernovas, and innumerable galaxies also makes living beings. We are living in an ocean of very ancient materials that are in constant flux. This is the forgotten ancient story of humanity.

In the *Chhandogya Upanishad* a father teaches his son: 'O good looking one, as by knowing a lump of earth all things made of earth become known, all transformation has speech as its basis, and it is "name only". Earth as such is the Reality.' By knowing one's own story the story of the universe is known. Why has humanity forgotten its heritage? Old age, disease, even death has no power over this story. The next chapter of the story states that matter is indestructible; it revolves from the Big Bang to the big expansion, to the big inevitable contraction, to the big crunch, and back again *ad infinitum*.

There is still another side to this ancient story: that of the mind. Swamiji says: 'We have just a little bit of sensuous consciousness and imagine that to be our entire mind and life; but, as a matter of fact, it is but a drop in the mighty ocean of subconscious mind.' Here lie the *samskaras*, impressions, millions of them, probably billions. These are experiences one has gone through life after life, from the lowest till the present, all forming an intricate web of history

in the subconscious. Everything done, said, and thought was recorded and obviously forgotten. Humans are ancient travellers leaping from body to body. The *Katha Upanishad* says: 'Some souls enter the womb for acquiring bodies, others follow the motionless, in accordance with their work and their knowledge.'


Where have we come from and where are we going? Apart from partly recording a long story, genes also give a blueprint for future development. Though the ancient past, present, and distant future is a long continuous story, yet it is an eternally revolving bondage. Humanity, however, has been scripting a different story unconsciously with the help of the mind, for as Swamiji says: 'The greatest power is lodged in the fine, not in the coarse.' This story of the mind will take humanity out of the wheel of matter and its eternal cycles.

Suppose we find someone who knows not just the ancient history of matter and its future but has completed his own story with the help of his tremendously powerful mind. Such a person, who has broken the rod of time, is called omniscient, enlightened. Swamiji says: 'There have been omniscient men, and, I believe, there will be yet; and that there will be myriads of them in the cycles to come.' Vedanta calls such persons *jivanmuktas*, free while living.

The story now enters into a greater dimension. It is known that all life has sprung from a common source. But who knows the infinitesimal details of the past, present, and future of all the innumerable living beings, of all matter and mind? Humanity calls such a one 'God'. God knows because God has given rise to the whole story. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* teaches: 'Crave to know well that from which all these beings take birth, and by that which they live after being born, that towards which they move and into which they merge. That is Brahman.'

This Brahman or God comes down as an avatara to our human consciousness to tell us our own forgotten story and where we are supposed to proceed to. The avataras—storytellers—Swamiji says, 'live the life of the whole human race' and reach the end: perfection. They thus show everything to humanity in a flash. Another name for God is *puranam*, ancient one, who is more ancient than the universe with its eternal cycles. Sri Ramakrishna says: 'Seeing an Incarnation of God is the same as seeing God Himself. God is born on earth as man in every age.' Humanity must thus 'crave to know well' the avatara.

God has descended in this age in the form of Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, to tell all her children the whole story. This great power called Mother took pity on her struggling and forgetful children and led them back home. The universe is her story and she is the writer. This is an ancient interesting story of grace, guidance, love, belongingness, and, above all, bliss. By coming down Holy Mother has shown humanity how to read it with understanding.

There is another way to look at it: Mother is the story and we are the writers and readers. All human knowledge and work and desires are nothing but she. Sri Ramakrishna worshipped and surrendered his all to her as Devi Shodashi, called Tripura-sundari, and also known as Sri Vidya. She, the Mother of the universe, the most beautiful one, who dwells in every person as the *kundalini shakti*, the repository of stored mental impressions is 'the real power coiled in every being, the mother of eternal happiness'. When awakened by love 'she', as Sri Ramakrishna reveals, 'is Sarada, Saraswati; she has come to impart knowledge'. Mother is supreme knowledge, beauty, auspiciousness, and bliss. Small wonder humans were attracted to her manifestations instead of going straight to her. This is the happy ending to the most ancient story. 

She Touched God: The Life of Sister Lalita

Pravrajika Brahmaprana

DURING THE 1970s, as a young nun at the Sarada Convent in Santa Barbara, I heard many stories about Sister Lalita from Swami Prabhavananda and senior nuns who had lived with her. These stories inspired me and made me feel privy to a rich oral tradition of the early Vedanta movement in America.

I would like to share some of those stories that describe a saintly woman, whose life of quiet strength became a role model for those sisters who had lived with her. To them, Sister Lalita was also not only one of the few then-living followers of Swami Vivekananda, but by inviting Prabhavananda to open a Vedanta centre in her home at 1946 Ivar Avenue, she made it possible for an important Vedanta work in Los Angeles to take root. For these reasons her story is an important contribution to the early history of the Vedanta movement.

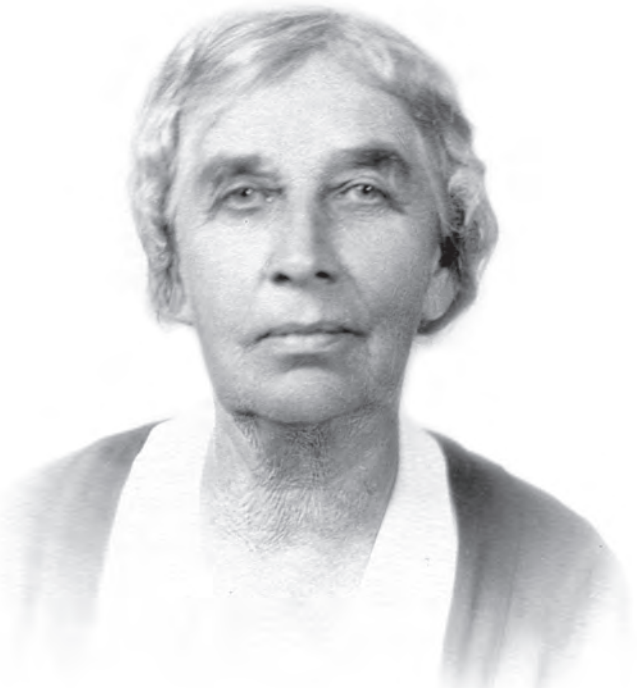
Fairy Land of Flowers

Sister Lalita, or Mrs Carrie Wyckoff, lived from 1859 until 1949. She was one of the three Mead sisters whose family hosted Swami Vivekananda at its rented South Pasadena home—now the Vivekananda House—during the winter of 1899–1900, which was during Vivekananda’s second visit to the West. Swami Turiyananda, who also visited the Mead sisters for two weeks in the summer of 1900, initiated Carrie Wyckoff in the rose garden of the Pasadena house. Later Swami Trigunatita gave her the name Sister Lalita.¹ ‘But,’ as Pravrajika Prabhaprana explained, ‘to

those of us who knew her in her later years, she was simply “Sister”.²

In fact, this affectionate term of endearment, ‘Sister,’ best encapsulates Sister Lalita’s greatness: her unassuming nature and natural humility. Though she had interacted much with three direct disciples of Ramakrishna and had turned her home over to Prabhavananda in December 1929, along with a hefty monthly annuity—and even donated ten thousand dollars of the twelve thousand necessary to complete the Hollywood temple’s construction—Sister Lalita never put herself forward or assumed any airs of ownership. When in the summer of 1941 Phoebe Nixon—later Pravrajika Prabhaprana—first came to the Hollywood centre, she remembered how she ‘saw an elderly white-haired lady bending over from the waist, weeding and tending the plants’ (ibid.). This was Sister: quiet, productive, and self-effacing.

Sister Lalita’s love for gardening was more than a hobby. It was her passion, her worship. Roses were her favourite flowers, and she insisted that they be watered separately. Even in her eighties, Sister tended her garden so that flowers were always available for daily worship in the shrine.



Jnanada—Anne Lowenkopf—who was a resident at the Vedanta centre during Sister's life, reminisced how she was completely ignorant and had been 'a grumbling conscript' in her mother's garden, until she met Sister. 'Serving Sister Lalita was a joy,' Jnanada wrote to me. 'All I had to offer was a strong back, ignorance, and pleasure in being with her. I wish I could convey the delight on her face [and] in her gestures as she'd plan, saying: "We'll make a fairy land of flowers." She infused me with her delight. It's with me till this day.'

Following in the footsteps of his guru Swami Brahmananda, Swami Prabhavananda used to instruct his monastics at the centre to garden at least one hour every day. Working with the soil, the swami explained, cultivates honesty and simplicity, necessary prerequisites for spiritual life. These qualities were embedded in Sister's character. 'Be pure, be true, and be strong' (179) were the teachings she had received from Vivekananda and his brother-disciples, and they were the precepts she lived by.

Once, as Sister Lalita was preparing food in the Pasadena house, Swami Vivekananda, who was pacing back and forth in the kitchen, suddenly asked her, 'Were you happily married?' Sister Lalita hesitated, then answered, 'Yes, Swamiji', whereupon he remarked dryly, 'I am glad that that there was one happy marriage!' The moment passed, but Sister never forgot it, and years later she became known as 'a stickler for telling the truth'.³

Truthfulness is purity, and purity is strength. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that truthfulness is the austerity of this age. To speak without embellishment, self-aggrandizement, or injury to others is a test of one's mental clarity, egolessness, and even mindedness. But Sister always adhered to Sri Ramakrishna's signature teaching to tell the truth, but never a harsh truth. A woman once came to the centre proudly wearing a rather gar-

ish hat. When asked how she liked it, Sister softly replied, 'That's a beautiful ribbon on the band.'⁴

Greatness in Little Things

Swami Vivekananda once said: 'As I grow older I find that I look more and more for greatness in little things. I want to know what a great man eats and wears, and how he speaks to his servants.'⁵ In this sense, Sister Lalita's greatness shone most brightly. Swami Turiyananda had once told her: 'You will have a work to do, but it will be a quiet work.'⁶ 'You had to *discover* Sister Lalita,' one devotee remarked. 'It was very easy to pass her by and go where all the activities were, but if you paused and got to know her, the least little thing you did for her made you feel rewarded. I don't know how to explain it, but you felt *good* if you ever did anything for Sister.'⁷

How many of us can make others feel good, not to speak of blessed? But Sister could—that was her strength—to transmit goodness and strength to those around her. I asked Jnanada what it was like to live with Sister. 'I got to serve her morning tea,' Jnanada wrote back. 'Never a grumpy word, even when I was late. Instead her enthusiasm for the day ahead. Never once in all the time I was in her [company] and despite all my many shortcomings did she scold. I've never known anyone who reported being scolded by her. She could disapprove. There was a certain regret in her voice when she spoke of [a particularly flamboyant member of the Vedanta household], but backbiting gossip was foreign to her.'⁸

Jnanada went on to write: 'I don't know anything about her spiritual life except that I felt it whenever I was near her. She blessed me, not with words but with love and being, blessings that hold me still.' Jnanada wept as she wrote those words.

From where did Sister Lalita's greatness come? Sister herself once confided to Sudhira—Helen Hall—a telling incident. 'At the house in Pa-

sadena, the bedrooms were on the second floor. Steep, narrow steps connected the first and second floors,' Sudhira reported.

One morning they were all coming down to breakfast, and Sister was right behind Swamiji. Suddenly, she got a little unsteady on those steep stairs, and she reached out in front of her using Swamiji's shoulder to brace herself. According to Sister, the whole world just went away. She was in another place, in another consciousness, and she never remembered getting down the rest of the stairs. But somehow he got her into the dining room and seated her, and then he took over. And he was so charming, and so entertaining, and so much fun that nobody noticed that Sister was all blanked out; that she was in another place. Just touching his shoulder had taken her there. From that moment on, Swamiji was God to Sister.⁹

Sudhira recalled how those who heard this story were moved by Sister's reverence when she stated, 'He is God'.¹⁰ Undoubtedly, Sister Lalita's inner experience on the staircase, hidden from the view of those who were present, was what nourished her later spiritual life. The sheer memory of that experience alone would undoubtedly have fuelled her daily meditations and lifted her consciousness to a place where others, such as Jnanada, could feel a special sense of 'being' or, as one nun expressed, a 'radiant serenity' emanating from her. Still another verified: 'I always felt in her presence something quite wonderful.'¹¹

Sister was regular in her meditations. Even in her eighties, she went to the shrine three times a day. Prabhaprana remembered how she would come into the shrine 'like a feather, without a sound, and sit cross-legged for an hour without moving'.¹² Christopher Isherwood, who was living at the Vedanta centre in the early days, used to marvel at seeing Sister in the shrine room. 'She had an air of unobtrusiveness,' Isherwood wrote,

'which was somehow majestic.'¹³ Once Sister Lalita apologized to Swami Prabhavananda for taking too long to prostrate before sitting for meditation. Sometimes it took longer for the Light to appear, she explained, assuming that everyone else also saw the Light when prostrating in the shrine.¹⁴



On Swami Vivekananda's day Sister Lalita would offer a special breakfast in the shrine, which has since become a tradition at the Vedanta Society of Southern California. However, when Sister served the breakfast it was as though she were back in time at 309 Monterey Road, serving Swamiji his American breakfast consisting of orange juice, two fried eggs, two strips of bacon, two pieces of toast and marmalade, and two cups of coffee with milk and sugar, the second one of which he would always enjoy with a cigarette. Those who attended this morning service related how they felt that it was not simply a ritual. Vivekananda was there.

On the last Vivekananda celebration that Sister Lalita attended, she left the temple and went to see

Swami Prabhavananda, who was too ill to attend. According to Abhaya—Mrs Kemp Driver—who was the swami's nurse, Sister 'entered the room, took his hand, and said, "They're all there." The swami nodded in assent' (180).

A Living Presence

Though Sister Lalita knew that she had touched God, undoubtedly her memories of her day-to-day relationship with Vivekananda during his four-weeks' stay with her family and his personal teachings to her also kindled her inner life and infused her karma yoga with mindfulness, meaning, and joy. 'When she was cooking,' one resident remembered, 'the tiniest seed had to be removed from the grapefruit, and she didn't rush around and drop things like most people do. Sometimes we'd be running late to get food cooked for offering and we'd think it would never get done on time. Still Sister didn't rush, and still everything

was done exactly on time, and it was good!'¹⁵

Sister Lalita loved to reminisce about her days with Vivekananda and, though retiring by nature, at those times she would become especially animated. To her, he was a living presence.¹⁶ Sister Lalita's early relationship with Swamiji was far from formal or remote. It was that of a close sibling. 'He was just like a brother,' Sister remarked. When asked what it was like to live with Vivekananda, she responded: 'He raised our consciousness up so we didn't feel while we were with him anything but just love and joy. And he was so much fun!'¹⁷ But, no matter how informal and intimate her relationship with Swamiji was, it was not without awestruck moments when she and her sisters would suddenly realize that Christ himself was living in their midst.¹⁸

When Vivekananda came to live at 309 Monterey Road, the small two-storey, three-bedroom Victorian-style house was filled with the Mead household: Mr Jesse Mead, his three daughters—Helen Mead, Alice Hansbrough, and Carrie Wyckoff, the 'Three Graces' as Swamiji called them—and Dorothy and Ralph, who were the children of Alice and Carrie respectively, plus Miss Fairbanks, the housekeeper. And for a few days during Swamiji's visit Miss Josephine MacLeod also stayed with the Meads as their house guest.

Swamiji, who had his own room upstairs, felt relaxed within this household. Every morning he would come downstairs to breakfast, hair wet and tousled from his bath, and wearing 'a worn black-and-white herringbone-tweed bathrobe, tied at the waist by a cord'.¹⁹ Before breakfast, he would take a walk in the garden behind the house or in the driveway at the side of the house—sometimes lost in thought or sometimes chanting or singing aloud. Breakfast, which Sister prepared, was leisurely; and if there was no ten o'clock morning class in Pasadena, the swami



PHOTO: COURTESY VEDANTA SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

would play with the children, read a book, or take another morning stroll in the garden. Swamiji was present at all meals and would sometimes invite students who had attended his morning classes—such as Miss Josephine MacLeod and her sister Mrs Francis Leggett—to come to lunch. Mealtime conversations were always lively, with talk of India or some spiritual topic. However, the sisters' favourite lunches were picnics on the knoll behind their house, attended by regular students of his morning classes. At those meals Mrs Hansbrough related: 'The air would become surcharged with a spiritual atmosphere' (5.258). On one of these occasions the swami talked uninterruptedly from ten in the morning until four in the afternoon. By the time he finished Mrs Hansbrough remembered, 'the air was just vibrant with spirituality' (*ibid.*).

The sisters cherished those moments as much as the swami's cosy, casual downtime, when he would relax on the couch after a meal calling out to Mrs Wyckoff: 'You work so hard that it makes me tired. Well, there have to be some Marthas, and you are a Martha' (5.259–60). Years later Sister would reflect: 'To think I didn't sit and talk with Swamiji when I could have!' ²⁰ But Vivekananda had patience with all of them. As Alice Hansbrough related: 'He took away any feeling on our part that he was superior to us.' ²¹ In the afternoons Swamiji would often write letters, stories, or poetry such as 'Who Knows How Mother Plays'. Occasionally he would give private interviews or sit for tea with family guests—sometimes in silence. Once when this happened, the departing visitor turned to the sisters and asked, 'Does this gentleman speak English?' (5.261). But by late afternoon Swamiji was ready to help Mrs Wyckoff prepare dinner. Sometimes he prepared chilli-hot curries, hand-grinding the spices as he sat cross-legged on the kitchen floor. ²² Then the swami would fry the spices in butter so hot their

eyes would smart from the smoke that arose from the stovetop. These were the times when Swamiji was at his merriest. 'Here comes grandpa!' he would call out. 'Ladies are invited to leave.' ²³ Such choice episodes undoubtedly played themselves over and over again as some of Sister's most cherished memories. The Vivekananda lila in South Pasadena was the fortress of Sister's inner life.

Vivekananda once asked Sister if she liked one of his spicy dishes. 'Yes,' she answered. But the swami was not to be fooled, 'Was it true or just for friendship's sake?' he asked. 'I am afraid it was for friendship's sake' (5.262), came the reluctant response. In simple ways such as these the swami changed those whose lives he touched.

After dinner the table would be cleared; a fire lit and the swami would gather with the family and an occasional guest such as Miss Josephine MacLeod. He would discuss a variety of subjects from philosophy and religion to history, science, and politics, or read aloud from various books. Once to punctuate a discussion on Advaita Vedanta he read from his poem 'The Song of the Sannyasin'. Another time he read from his lecture on 'The Need of a Guru', until Helen Mead offered him his bedroom candle. 'Does that mean I must go to bed?' Swamiji asked. 'Well,' Helen replied, 'it is eleven o'clock.' The sisters long remembered this. How could they have ignored his invitation for discipleship? But, in their case, initiation was not a necessary formality. 'I have known all three of you before,' Vivekananda once told them. And in the summer of 1900 he wrote to Mrs Hansbrough, 'You three sisters have become a part of my mind forever' (5.264–5). What greater expression of acceptance could a teacher have conveyed to his disciples?

Tasting the Ocean of Existence

It is curious to see how in Sister Lalita's life strength and humility went hand in hand.

The first words that Sister ever heard from Vivekananda's lips were those of strength. On 8 December 1899 the three Mead sisters attended the swami's world-famous first Los Angeles lecture in Blanchard Hall. 'God cannot be known to the external senses,' he stated. 'The Infinite, the Absolute, cannot be grasped. Yet although it eludes us, we may not infer its non-existence. It exists.' Then he went on in a jnani fashion to assert in no uncertain terms what, how, and where God the Absolute exists: 'What is it that cannot be seen by the outward eye? The eye itself. It may behold all other things, but itself it cannot mirror. This, then, is the solution. If God may not be found by the outer senses, turn your eye inward and find, in yourself, the soul of all souls.' 'When I have realized that I myself am the Absolute,' Vivekananda continued, 'for me there is no more death nor life nor pain nor pleasure, nor caste nor sex' (5.186). At the end of the lecture he chanted in his baritone voice: 'I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute' (5.189).

Sister Lalita had tasted that ocean of Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss when she touched Vivekananda on the staircase in her home. She had touched God, and such a vast ocean of consciousness had swelled up deep within her that she lost normal consciousness. No doubt that experience served as a witness by which she was later able to measure all the events of her life. It was also undoubtedly the same source of strength by which she was able to see equality and spiritual strength in all those around her. Why else would she be sometimes prompted to step aside for even those younger than she to enter a room first?²⁴ Sister Lalita knew, after all, that the ocean of consciousness that manifested within her was also present within all.

That experience also gave Sister a working strength. She never hid behind a false sense of perfection. It seemed effortless for her to simply

admit her foibles with a humorous 'Well, I needn't do *that* again,' and then get on with her life. This sense of humour—a mark of her detachment—made her a natural peacemaker. 'Just relax,' she would say when tensions would build up between residents at the centre. 'Don't hurry. Don't rush. Five minutes one way or the other won't make a difference.'²⁵ And people would listen. Pravrajika Varadaprana wrote me: 'Sister was sweet at all times and totally self-effacing. She walked so softly you could hardly hear her. But at the same time she had strength of character and conviction.'²⁶

A charmed life is not what made Sister Lalita great. She understood tragedy and loss. In 1925 Ralph, her only son, was buried in a landslide and, seriously injured, he lingered for three days afterwards. On the third night Mrs Wyckoff dreamt that Vivekananda, knee-deep in ocean water, was walking towards the shore, carrying Ralph in his arms. When she awoke, she realized that Ralph had died.²⁷ Carrie Wyckoff was devastated and her health suffered from the shock and grief of her loss.

However, this was not the first time she had endured unbearable suffering. One day in 1900, after a severe bout of depression, Carrie Wyckoff reached for a pipe that Vivekananda had left behind on the mantel of the Pasadena house as a keepsake. 'I always leave behind something wherever I go,' the swami had said. 'I am going to leave this pipe when I go to San Francisco.'²⁸ As soon as Mrs Wyckoff picked up the pipe, she heard Vivekananda's voice: 'Is it so hard, madam?' For some reason she rubbed the pipe across her forehead and her suffering was transformed into a feeling of well-being. That pipe now belongs to the Vedanta Society of Southern California.

With Ralph's death in 1925, however, Sister Lalita's grief was finally assuaged in a different way. It must have been about three years later, in

1928, that Sister met Swami Prabhavananda of the Vedanta Society of Portland, who was lecturing in California at the time. She felt drawn like a mother to this young swami. Because Sister also revered Prabhavananda as a teacher, she asked to help with his Vedanta work, first in Portland, and a year later she invited the swami to accept her home in the Hollywood Hills as a Vedanta centre in Los Angeles. 'Yes,' Swami Shivananda, the then president of the Ramakrishna Order, wrote to Prabhavananda, 'I give you permission to open a centre in Los Angeles.'²⁹ In December 1929 Prabhavananda moved in to Sister's home, the Green House at 1946 Ivar Avenue.

Though Sister Lalita was in her seventies, she took over the cooking, cleaning, and gardening and later performed the five-item worship³⁰ in a small shrine room which was built onto the original house. Prabhavananda took charge of the maintenance and ministry. During the Depression times were so hard that they ate only popcorn and milk for supper.

But once Sister Lalita deeded her home to the Vedanta Society there was no turning back. Prabhavananda used to say: 'Sister and I lived together for more than twenty years, and there was never a harsh word between us.'³¹ Once he stipulated that all residents must first ask permission before leaving the compound, a rule by which Sister Lalita also complied. 'Sister, you don't have to ask my permission,' Prabhavananda protested. But such was Sister's humility that she insisted: 'Swami, I'd like to ask permission if the others have to.'³² Sister Lalita's greatness was that she never put herself above others.

So close was the relationship between Prabhavananda and Sister that when in 1935 they travelled to India together, Prabhavananda noted that Prabhavananda's mother, 'felt a certain jealousy seeing her son with Sister.' To Sister, the swami undoubtedly filled the void that Ralph's



death had left her. But, according to Prabhavananda, the two women developed a sweet relationship even with the language barrier. On the last day they were together, the swami's mother placed his hand in Sister's, turning him over to her.³³

While in India, Prabhavananda and Sister Lalita associated with two direct disciples of Ramakrishna: Swamis Akhandananda and Vijnanananda, the president and vice-president of the Ramakrishna Order. 'Isn't Sister Lalita wonderful?' Vijnanananda remarked to Prabhavananda. He had accompanied the swami and Sister to Kamarpukur and Jayrambati. 'We travelled in the same car for so many hours, and she never said a word. How quiet!'³⁴ Sister's quietude was extraordinary. Unprompted by shyness, rather, it came from being completely at peace with herself.

In July 1949 Sister Lalita contracted pneumonia while staying in the Santa Barbara convent. Those who nursed Sister felt privileged to serve

her. By just looking at her face one would feel joy well up within, one resident remembered. Sister was always dainty and 'oh, so feminine', Jnanada remembered. 'I loved to look at her.'³⁵ Even though bedridden, she would ask that a ribbon be first put in her hair before the doctor came. But Sister was never demanding. When the nuns noticed that her bedsocks were worn and asked why she had not asked that they be replaced, she gently offered: 'Oh, I was planning to go into town to buy them.'³⁶

Prabhaprana noticed that as the end approached Sister 'was detaching herself and withdrawing into another world' (180). Another nun also observed: 'You could feel during those last days that Swamiji was with her. She would sometimes gesture as if she were trying to touch something.'³⁷ 'A few days before Sister Lalita passed away,' Prabhaprana remembered, 'Swami Prabhavananda gave her Ganges water, and she repeated after him the names of Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swamiji, and Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) and [Swami] Turiyananda.' She went on to say: 'Jnanada was in her room early in the morning of 23 July 1949. A little sigh from Sister caused her to look up. Sister quietly slipped out of this world, as quietly as she had lived in it.'³⁸

Hers was 'a quiet work', but for those who had the privilege to know her, what a great work it was!

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Relaxing into Meditation

Ngakma Nor'dzin

MEDITATION IS the bedrock of Buddhist practice and is also important in many other spiritual systems. Yet there can be a certain mystery around meditation. What is it? How do you do it? And why is it such a worthwhile practice? What is the principle and function of meditation? The principle of Buddhism is the discovery of the non-duality of emptiness and form, of wisdom and compassion. The natural quality of the mind is empty wisdom, and once that wisdom is discovered the natural movement of the mind into form manifests as compassion and kindness. This is the state of being fully awake. Hence, the primary purpose of meditation is to gain direct experience of the mind. Only through direct experience of the mind is it possible to discover wisdom.

It is usual to know the mind only through thought processes. Thought is like an intricate mesh that surrounds the deep quietness of empty mind and acts as a filter for everything that is experienced. To achieve relaxation of mind it is necessary to examine and understand the nature of mind and discover what mind is when it is no longer defined by thought. 'Mind without thought' needs to be discovered. Thought is a natural process of the mind; but thought is not the essence of the mind. Thought leads to intellectual wisdom, but the deep well of empty mind from which thought arises is of itself inherent wisdom.

The Practice of Meditation

Meditation is the most beneficial practice that we can do in our lives. It makes us happier and more aware, and this increased awareness and happiness naturally manifests as kindness and caring for others. Meditation can be regarded as an esoteric practice however, and may appear to be inaccessible to some people. Anyone can learn to meditate and experience its benefits in spite of not being interested in joining any spiritual tradition. One way in which I have tried to make meditation available to a wider audience is through teaching in community education systems. Besides basic meditation methods, the introduction of relaxation and breathing exercises has helped. Many of the practices were based on Buddhism, though the course was not presented as Buddhist to thus make it available to anyone with an interest in meditation.

The first problem encountered was that many people came to the meditation class believing that meditation would be relaxing and that it would help

them with stress and emotional problems. Meditation does lead to relaxation—ultimate and total relaxation—but the practice of meditation is not initially relaxing because it is challenging and demanding. Relaxation could almost be called a by-product of meditation. It is therefore helpful to begin with breathing and relaxation exercises to address stress and emotional problems first. Then, when the body is more relaxed and the deepening and slowing of the breathing has settled the mind a little, it is possible to begin meditation.

Stress and unhappiness manifest in the body, so techniques can be employed to relax muscles. In states of agitation breathing becomes faster and more shallow, consequently exercises that slow and deepen breathing produce calmness. Happiness may manifest as spontaneous outbursts of singing, but it is difficult to sing when sad or stressed. Relaxation techniques that employ singing yogic syllables can be relaxing and liberating. Such exercises function as preparation for meditation. Meditation is demanding because it requires an alert and attentive state of being and the capacity to remain focused. Meditation is challenging because it is revelatory and gives rise to questioning, confusion, and discomfiture. It questions our usual state of being, confusion about experiences that arise in meditation, and discomfiture when increased awareness reveals patterns of territorialism, intolerance, neediness, paranoia, and carelessness. Some people assume that meditation is a 'natural' activity and therefore an effortless one. Although it is true that a meditative state is mind's natural condition, this state has to be discovered through employing the method of meditation. Applying the method of meditation requires effort. Initial glimpses of mind without thought can be startling and push the boundaries of one's comfort zone. Meditation, like any new venture, changes us. Some people feel uneasy in the face of change and resort to daydreaming in-

stead of meditation. They enter a cosy, woolly, inner world where the mind is allowed to drift like cotton wool through the vagaries of conceptual mind—no longer really dwelling on thought, but also not truly letting it go. This is easier than developing concentration, less unsettling than finding mind without thought, and more comfortable than facing change. There is no harm in daydreaming, but it is not meditation and will not develop awareness. It may be relaxing, but it will not enable the discovery of the spaciousness of mind. It may be comfortable, but it will be of no value in times of stress and emotional conflict.

The No-mind

Having relaxed the body and calmed the breathing through relaxation exercises, meditation can begin. The objective of meditation is to free the mind of its addiction to thought, to liberate awareness of the empty essence of mind from the constricting mesh of conceptual thought that obscures it. For this it is necessary to let go of thought. Thought cannot be forced out of the mind; that would be like saying, 'do not think about an elephant'. The ideal situation must be created in order to allow the mind to simply settle of itself so that thought can subside. Gradually, awareness grows, and that awareness of thought arising becomes more and more immediate and the compulsion to engage with thought subsides. Then, mind without thought is discovered. Mind without thought is not a state of suppressed thought but a vibrant, creative state of awareness. It is vivid with an electric sense of being awake in the present moment.

Ultimate relaxation can only be achieved by becoming familiar with and comfortable in the state of mind without thought, by experiencing the empty essence of mind's nature. In order to access this state a commitment to meditation practice is required, but this need not be an onerous

commitment. Ten minutes a day of meditation practice is all that is required for its benefits to be experienced. It is more productive to meditate for a short period every day than for a longer period occasionally. A daily practice of ten minutes meditation, letting go of thought, will lead to the discovery of mind without thought.

It may be considered that ten minutes of meditation a day is insufficient for anything of value to be achieved, but this is not the case. The important thing with any commitment is to make it achievable, consistent, and enjoyable; otherwise it becomes a chore and is soon abandoned. If ten minutes of practice has been regularly accomplished, there is always the option to meditate for longer time. There is also the possibility of having several ten minute sessions in a day. In this way meditation can be achieved consistently and can be enjoyed, setting a pattern of success in the mind-stream. Through short daily sessions of practice the meditator's awareness and focus increase and *moments* of mind without thought start to take place. Then *periods* of mind without thought will occur. Gradually, it becomes possible to feel comfortable in the empty space of the mind and dwell there. When one is accustomed to spaciousness of mind, one begins to feel more relaxed about oneself. Life circumstances feel less pressured. The mechanism of self-centred habit patterns becomes transparent and a response of being kind to others arises more naturally and more often. Choice is discovered about who one is and how one lives one's life. Emotion is recognised as naked energy. Sensory experience becomes enlivened.

Expansion of the Mind

When letting go of thought becomes a familiar practice it is then possible to engage in practices of contemplation and visualization, which offer the opportunity to change the ordinary view into

an open, more expansive, and benevolent view. These methods require the capacity to remain focused, which has been gained through learning to let go of thought and remaining comfortable in mind without thought. Transformative practices such as purification, and contemplative practices such as examining our relationship with a friend, an enemy, and a stranger can be confidently approached from the perspective of the experience of spaciousness of mind. The development of loving kindness is an important practice in Buddhism. First equanimity is developed and then this is expanded into wishing all beings to be happy, fulfilled, and free of pain. The aspiration is to develop loving kindness towards all sentient beings. All sentient beings must be understood individually, one by one, and not as a nebulous, non-specific, abstract fantasy. Each and every being includes all—spouse, children, friends and family, colleagues, people one meets on a train or bus, employer and employees, neighbours, teachers, other people's children, shop assistants, telephone call-centre staff, tax inspectors ... everyone everywhere. It also includes oneself.

It is important to translate the experience that has been discovered through contemplative and visualization practices into our lives. This experience needs to move beyond the meditation cushion to be actuated. Practices of purification, equanimity, and loving kindness have a 'feel good factor' that puts us in danger of becoming satisfied only with this feeling, which blocks further action. If we rise from our meditation cushion feeling we have done well but do not remember that experience in our everyday life, the experience will never extend out into our life to help us make a positive difference. Prayer, kindly wishes, and expressions of goodwill do produce good results, but these need to be followed through with actual kindly activity and real work for the benefit of others.



Carl Jung: Deconstructing the Reincarnation Myth

Dr Pramila Davidson

CARL JUNG IS widely regarded as one of the great seminal minds of the twentieth century. He was a qualified doctor and a trained psychoanalyst. He was, for a while, Freud's greatest disciple and heir apparent. His personal odyssey began with his rejection of psychoanalysis as being too narrow in its understanding of mental health. In spite of intellectual and social isolation Jung stuck to his convictions. He developed a new paradigm and called it Analytical Psychology. It was an original way of treating patients with mental illness. Over time Jung changed our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. Concepts like 'myth', 'archetype', 'the collective unconscious', 'persona', 'symbols', 'icons', 'synchronicity', and the like originate in Analytical Psychology. This article is a basic sketch of some aspects of Jung's life and work as they show the idea of metempsychosis or reincarnation.

Origins and Early Influences

Carl was born on 26 July 1875 to Rev Johann Paul Achilles Jung, a pastor of the Swiss Reformed Church, and his wife Emelie. There were eight uncles, all Protestant ministers. The mother too was the daughter of a clergyman. Carl's maternal grandfather Samuel Preiswerk, a renowned clergyman, was fascinated by the occult. There are stories of his frequent séances where he talked to his first wife, who was dead. Apparently, Jung's mother Emelie sat during these sessions. Jung's rejection of psychoanalysis may have been rooted in the belief that his mother was not psychotic

but a mystic and psychic. Emelie seems to have had a sixth sense; she felt that she was surrounded by 'the chattering dead' and even kept a diary to record clairvoyant episodes. One night Jung saw 'a faintly luminous, indefinite figure whose head detached itself from the neck and floated along in front of it, in the air, like a little moon ... coming from her room.'¹

The great thing about Jung right from the start is his reliance on direct perception, even when it seems irrational and contradicts established opinion. He records his experiences, however weird, carefully. For example, as a young boy, Jung seems to have had flashbacks into a previous life:

An ancient green carriage ... drove past our house one day. It was truly an antique, looking exactly as if it had come straight out of the eighteenth century. When I saw it, I felt with great excitement: 'That's it! Sure enough that comes from *my* times.' It was as though I had recognized it because it was the same type as the one I had driven in myself ... I cannot describe ... what affected me so strongly: a longing, a nostalgia, or a recognition that kept saying, 'Yes, that's how it was' (34).

As a trained scientist Jung found no empirical proof for such phenomena. He simply records them as part of his personal, inner landscape and leaves it to his readers to judge their validity. In spite of the ridicule heaped on him and his long exile from scholastic circles, he insists on asking whether things such as ghosts exist. Is there an afterlife? Have we lived before?

Is immortality a mirage? Jung's remarks below are typical of his views:

There are people who feel no craving for immortality, and who shudder at the thought of sitting on a cloud and playing the harp for ten thousand years! There are also quite a few who have been so buffeted by life or who feel such disgust for their own existence, that they far prefer absolute cessation to continuance. But in the majority of cases the question of immortality is so urgent, so immediate, and also so ineradicable that we must make an effort to form some sort of view about it.

Reason sets the boundaries far too narrowly for us, and would have us accept only the known—and that too with limitations—and live in a known framework, just as if we were sure how far life actually extends. As a matter of fact, day after day we live far beyond the bounds of our consciousness; without our knowledge, the life of the unconscious is also going on within us. The more the critical reason dominates, the more impoverished life becomes; but the more of the unconscious, the more of myth we are capable of making conscious, the more of life we integrate. Overvalued reason has this in common with political absolutism: under its dominion the individual is pauperized (301–2).

These are strong words, radical in their critique of established norms, not only in psychology but in the empiricism that dominated European thought in the nineteenth century as well. As is obvious from the passages quoted above, Jung is not content with mere criticism. He speaks of 'myth' and 'the unconscious' that gives our life its fullness. These are key concepts in Analytical Psychology. In the interest of clarity it is necessary to give a summary of a tiny part of this new discipline; it divides the psyche into three parts: The ego or conscious mind, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious.

The personal unconscious contains personal experiences—forgotten, repressed, or subliminally perceived, thought, and felt. The personal layers go only so far as early childhood memories. There is moreover a collective unconscious, which represents the totality of human and animal experience.² It throws up 'universal thought forms' that act as a blueprint for individual experience. It contains memories of pre-infantile experience. In a radical departure from Freud, Jung sees it as the residue of ancestral experience. It is not restricted to the racial memory of one country or a single system of thought. It is the common heritage of humanity and is an a priori condition for all experience. This rich inheritance shapes individual life and must be integrated into personal experience, if we are to reach our full potential as human beings.³ The unconscious lays the blueprint for 'the soul's cycle of experience'. Jung cites the case of Robert Mayer, the real creator of the idea of conservation of energy. He tells us that Mayer was a physician, a doctor, not a physicist or philosopher. It was odd that he came up with an idea that caused a paradigm shift in physics. The discovery was credited to sheer intuition or inspiration. Jung sees it as the tapping of the resources of the collective unconscious: 'A primordial image that was dormant in the collective unconscious. Such a conclusion obliges us to prove that a primordial image of the kind really did exist in the mental history of mankind' (67).

There must be millions of 'dormant images' in the collective unconscious. Why did Mayer pick on the law of conservation of energy for which he had very limited scientific training? Besides, why did such an important idea come to Mayer and not to scientists who were working in that field? 'Whence came this new idea that thrust itself upon consciousness with such elemental force?' (68). In his discussion on archetypes, Jung does mention the 'karmic' factor, which adds a

new element to the personal unconscious, but he does not give the idea its full force. Could we say that Mayer's previous life experiences prepared him for the discovery? Jung continues: 'In the idea of the soul's immortality there is implicit its conservation, and in the Buddhist and primitive notion of metempsychosis—transmigration of souls—is implicit its unlimited changeability together with its constant duration' (69). 'I have never yet found infallible evidence for the inheritance of memory images, but I do not regard it as positively precluded that in addition to ... collective deposits which contain nothing specifically individual, there may also be inherited memories that are individually determined' (190). Jung has a rather opaque style of expression, but this comes close to an admission of the idea of reincarnation. He freely acknowledges his debt to Hindu and Buddhist philosophy; it's just that he never quite walks the last mile.

Reincarnation

In his fascinating book *The Soul Genome*, Paul Von Ward introduces the concept of a 'psychoplasm that coheres, maintains, and carries forward more than just the patterns contained in the ten percent of our DNA known as genome.'⁴ Von Ward offers a scientific explanation for the 'psychoplasm' based on Einstein's law of conservation of energy:

Let's assume the three-faceted view of the universe's basic structure (matter, energy, and consciousness) is correct and that all three can only be changed in form, but not destroyed. In that case, there must be a consciousness analogous to the law of conservation of energy. ... Reincarnation may be the manifestation of the 'law of conservation of consciousness'.

Adapting Einstein's formula $E=MC^2$ that describes the interchangeable, but indestructible nature of matter and energy, one could illustrate the interchangeable, indestructible

nature of consciousness with a formula like $\text{Mind}=\text{Lifetimes}^X$. Reincarnation may be the process through which the universe provides for the preservation of learning when organisms ... transition during a 'quantum leap' from one physical state to another (67–8).

There is bound to be a lot of controversy and debate on Von Ward's hypothesis. How could Mayer reach such a pinnacle of scientific achievement in a single lifetime? Does it prove Von Ward's hypothesis? If each one of us had to reinvent the electric bulb, we would still be living in the Stone Age. From an Indian perspective it is interesting that Swami Vivekananda makes a firm connection between immortality and conservation of energy: 'You cannot take away one atom of matter or one foot-pound of force. You cannot add to the universe one atom of matter or one foot-pound of force.'⁵ 'Everything in this universe is indestructible' (2.229). Swamiji goes at great lengths to give proofs for the idea of reincarnation. He shows by his rigorous logic that knowledge comes from direct experience, if not in this life in some previous birth:

Without a fund of already existing experience, any new experience would be impossible, for there would be nothing to which to refer the new impression. ... Knowledge can only be got in one way, the way of experience; there is no other way to know. If we have not experienced it in this life, we must have experienced it in other lives. ... What we call instinct in men or animals must ... be involved, degenerated, voluntary actions, and voluntary actions are impossible without experience' (2.220–1).

In other words, the 'preservation of learning' is inherent in the process of reincarnation. Swamiji ridicules the idea that human beings have come out of zero, starting life with a 'tabula rasa', and then attaining to great knowledge or eternal life. 'Neither you, nor I nor anyone

present, has come out of zero, nor will go back to zero' (2.217). As always, Swamiji shows the fallacy of not thinking an idea through to its logical conclusion. 'If we are going to exist in eternity hereafter, it must be that we have existed through eternity in the past' (2.218). In another context, speaking about avatars or perfect human beings like Buddha and Christ, Swamiji considers them to be men who have gone through the entire history of the human race in a single lifespan and achieved perfection (2.209). He holds Sri Ramakrishna to be a supreme example of this.

Jung makes an assumption that seems astonishing when pitted against Swamiji's logic. He assumes, without the slightest proof of how this is scientifically possible, that we inherit the entire experience of living creatures; neither he explains how this transmission can take place in a scenario where life stops at death and we become nothing but fodder for worms thereafter. Swamiji says:

The simple hereditary theory takes for granted the most astonishing proposition without any proof, that mental experience can be recorded in matter, that mental experience can be involved in matter. When I look at you, in the lake of my mind there is a wave. That wave subsides, but it remains in fine form, as an impression. We understand a physical impression remaining in the body. But what proof is there for assuming that the mental impression can remain in the body since the body goes to pieces?

Again, if in the bioplasmic cell the infinite amount of impressions from all time has entered, where and how is it? ... This impression is in the mind, that the mind comes to take its birth and rebirth, and uses the material which is most proper for it, and that mind which has made itself fit for only a particular kind of body will have to wait until it gets that material. ... The theory then comes to this, that there is hereditary transmission so far as furnishing the material to the soul is concerned. But the soul migrates and

manufactures body after body, and each thought we think, and each deed we do, is stored in it in fine forms, ready to spring up again and take a new shape. ... When I die the resultant force of them will be upon me' (2.222-3).

These words contain not only the idea of the personal and collective unconscious, but point out the greatest flaw in the Jungian argument: It's possible for us to access the collective unconscious only because of our previous life experiences. In fact, Jung's theory of the personal and collective unconscious can stand its ground only if it is supported by the idea of reincarnation.

Living in a Moment Forever

Much has been written about Jung's connection with Goethe due to his profound influence over Jung's thought. Jung was drawn to Goethe's *Faust* because it delves into multiple layers of consciousness and shows the reach of both the personal and the collective unconscious. It is also

Carl Jung in his library at home
in Küsnacht, Switzerland, 5 September 1949



a classic portrayal of life spilling into an afterlife, of a single unbroken stream of consciousness. There are many versions of *Faust*. Essentially, it tells the story of a man who sells his soul to the devil in return for a life of indulgence and pleasure, and finally faces eternal damnation. In Goethe's *Faust*, God's favourite human being, Faust, is a scientist dissatisfied with his scholarly achievements. The devil, Mephistopheles, follows Dr Faust home after an Easter parade—a celebration of resurrection? He assumes the form of a poodle. When Faust reaches home the poodle turns into Mephistopheles. The devil makes Faust promise that if he experiences a moment that he likes so much that he wants to stay in it forever, Faust will die in that instant and serve him thereafter. The pact is signed with blood. Faust succumbs to temptations in various forms, but is eventually saved from eternal damnation by the mercy of God. Jung seems to have been struck with the idea of *des pudels kern*, the kernel, the real or deeper meaning of a thing. The Holy Grail is, for Jung, to touch what lies beneath, to reach the very soul of an experience. The idea of eternal and indestructible life is implicit in the concept of 'living in a moment forever'. Even so, it is the immortality of a specific human being.

Jung read the Upanishads, but he made no reference to the *Katha Upanishad*. The theme is similar. In the sublime interaction between Nachiketa and Yama, Nachiketa rejects pleasure, a long life, kingship, wealth, and fair maidens, and asks for the secret of life after death. Through goodness and purity he attains an understanding of the indestructible and eternal Atman, of immortality. This is not in terms of a body living forever, or an ethereal moment lasting through eternity, but in truly grasping Truth or Reality. So far as I can make out, for Jung this remained a quest, a journey not quite finished. The search for immortality begins and ends with God.

The kernel of Jung's work is a deep and abiding interest in God, across cultures and religions. His archetypes and myths have their roots in the sacred. Descartes had famously said: '*Cogito ergo sum*; I think therefore I am.' Jung traces the roots of the human psyche to religious feeling. For example, in 1906 Jung moved to his new home 'Bollingen' in Küsnacht. Not surprisingly, above the entrance were the words: '*Vocatus atque non vocatus Deus aderit*; invoked or not, God will be present.' Jung took this saying from a Delphic oracle quoted by Erasmus. For him, it *contains the entire reality of the psyche*.⁶

It was probably his interest in religion that led Jung to travel to India in December 1937 with Fowler McCormick. He toured the country extensively. He met many people as there was no language barrier. Unfortunately, he fell ill and had to be hospitalized in Calcutta for two weeks, during which he was in a delirious state. There is no record of who he met in India or the texts he might have discussed. The stamp of Indian thought on Jung is so strong that there is little or no need to stress the point.

Coming to the idea of reincarnation per se, Jung never committed himself categorically for or against it. In *On Life after Death* he 'mythologizes' about the Hindu and Buddhist views on reincarnation:

One widespread myth of the hereafter is formed by the ideas and images centering on reincarnation. ... In keeping with the spirit of the East, the succession of birth and death is viewed as an endless continuity, as an eternal wheel rolling on forever without a goal. Man lives and attains knowledge and dies and begins again from the beginning. ...

The idea of rebirth is inseparable from that of karma. The crucial question is whether a man's karma is personal or not. If it is, then the preordained destiny with which a man enters life represents an achievement of previous lives,

and a personal continuity therefore exists. ...

Buddha was twice asked by his disciples whether man's karma is personal or not. Each time he fended off the question and did not go into the matter; to know this, he said, would not contribute to liberating oneself from the illusion of existence. ... I could well imagine that I might have lived in former centuries and there encountered questions I was not yet able to answer; that I had been born again because I had not fulfilled the task that was given to me. When I die, my deeds will follow along with me—that is how I imagine it. I will bring with me what I have done.⁷

I try to see the line which leads through my life into the world, and out of the world again (320).

This is as direct as Jung gets about reincarnation: A scientist presenting the occidental and oriental view and then adding a personal component! In 1944 Jung had a heart attack and an NDE (Near Death Experience):

It seemed to me that I was high up in space. ... A short distance away I saw in space a tremendous dark block of stone, like a meteorite. It was about the size of my house, or even bigger. It was floating in space, and I myself was floating in space. ... An entrance led into a small antechamber. To the right of the entrance, a black Hindu sat silently in lotus position upon a stone bench. He wore a white gown, and I knew that he expected me. ... As I approached the steps leading up to the entrance in the rock, a strange thing happened. I had the feeling that everything was being sloughed away; everything I aimed at or wished for or thought, the whole phantasmagoria of earthly existence, fell away or was stripped from me—an extremely painful process. Nevertheless something remained; it was as if I now carried along with me everything that I had ever experienced or done, everything that had happened around me. I might also say: It was with me, and I was it. ... I consisted of my own history and I felt with great certainty: this

is what I am. 'I am this bundle of what has been and what has been accomplished.'

There was no longer any regret that something had dropped away or been taken away. On the contrary: I had everything that I was and that was everything. Something else engaged my attention: as I approached the temple I had the certainty that I was about to enter an illuminated room and would there meet those people to whom I belong in reality. There I would at last understand—this too was a certainty—what historical nexus I or my life fitted into. I would know what had been before me, why I had come into being and where my life was flowing. My life as I lived it had often seemed to me like a story that has no beginning or end. I had the feeling that I was a historical fragment, an excerpt for which the preceding and succeeding text was missing. My life seemed to have been snipped out of a long chain of events, and many questions had remained unanswered. Why had it taken this course? Why had I brought these particular assumptions with me? What had I made of them? What will follow? I felt sure that I would receive an answer to all these questions as soon as I entered the rock temple. ...

[Then] an image floated up. It was my doctor Dr. H.—or, rather, his likeness—framed by a golden chain. ... A mute exchange of thought took place between us. Dr. H. had been delegated by the earth to deliver a message to me, to tell me that there was a protest against my going away. I had no right to leave the earth and must return (290–2).

The vision ceases. Jung is disappointed that he is not allowed to enter the temple or join the people to whom he belonged. He was critically ill for three more weeks. Jung worried about the doctor because he had appeared in a primal form in his dream. As it turned out the doctor took ill on the day Jung sat up, 4 April 1944. Soon afterwards the doctor died of septicaemia.

This is a rather long extract, but I could find no way of conveying a feel of the original without

quoting it. It is significant that at the moment of truth Jung comes to a temple, to a 'black Hindu'. For Jung, this was certainly the moment in which he wanted to stay forever. He was deeply annoyed at being brought back to life. He records a dream after his illness, which is equally significant:

I came to a small wayside chapel. The door was ajar, and I went in. To my surprise there was no image of the Virgin on the altar, and no crucifix either, but only a wonderful flower arrangement. But then I saw that on the floor in front of the altar, facing me, sat a yogi—in lotus posture, in deep meditation. When I looked at him more closely, I realized that he had my face. I started in profound fright, and awoke with the thought: 'Aha, so he is the one who is meditating me. He has a dream and I am it' (323).

These are beautiful words, reminiscent of Indian sages. Jung may not have openly endorsed the idea of reincarnation, but the absence of any Christian symbols in the temple seems to suggest the Advaita conception of God as being impersonal and formless. At any rate, Jung's experiences

Carl Jung sitting on a stone wall overlooking Lake Zurich in Bollingen, Switzerland; 5 September 1949



are a testament to an awareness of life persisting beyond the grave, of seeing life as an infinite expanse of the glory that is God. Carl Jung died at his home 'Bollingen' in Küsnacht, at a quarter to four on Tuesday afternoon, 6 June 1961. Lightning struck his favourite tree in his lakeside garden an hour or so after his death! Jung seems to have had premonitions of his death. In one significant dream Jung saw 'the other Bollingen' bathed in a glow of light. A voice told him that it was completed and ready for habitation. The 'golden tower on the other side of the lake' was now ready for him to move in.⁸

Man here, God there.
Weakness and nothingness here, there
Eternally creative power.
Here nothing but darkness and
Chilling moisture.
There wholly sun.⁹

PB

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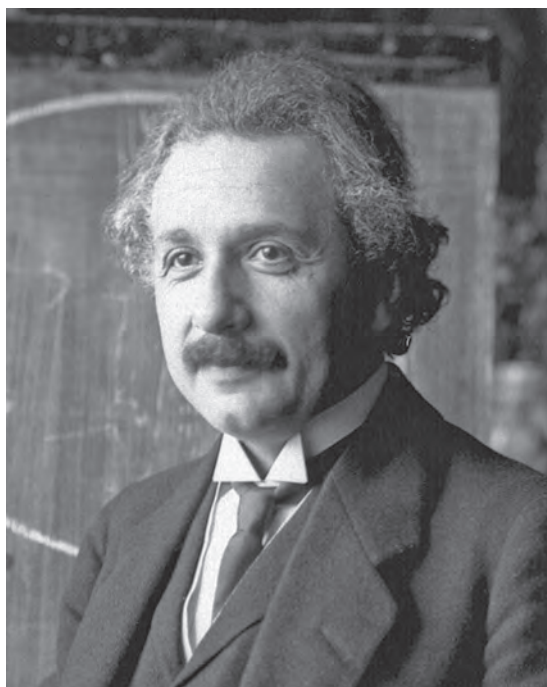
Albert Einstein: Scientific Genius and Mystic

Swami Atmajnanananda

WE OCCASIONALLY COME ACROSS historical figures that do not seem to fit into any particular category or mould. They may be found in any number of fields, but generally it is their simultaneous presence in several areas that marks such individuals as unique. This phenomenon is especially pronounced in the life of the great scientist and humanist Albert Einstein. He was a man whose mind was able to penetrate into the mysteries of the universe, and yet he clearly understood that there lies a transcendent reality beyond the visible world of the senses that is both divine and absolute. He was a man who had the deepest feelings for others' suffering and an abiding sense of kindness and fairness, and at the same time was by nature a loner and often distant in his relationships with others. Perhaps most paradoxically, and surely tragically, he was an ardent pacifist and keen admirer of Mahatma Gandhi and his non-violent movement, as well as a key figure in the creation of the single-most destructive weapon of his day: the atom bomb.

An Instructive Life

Before discussing some of the above issues, especially his role in creating the atom bomb, we first need to ask a very simple question: Why should the life of a scientist be of special interest to a student of Vedanta or spirituality in general? Quite frankly, this question



Albert Einstein during a lecture in Vienna in 1921 (age 42)

was the very one that entered my mind when I was presented with a book on Einstein written by one of the senior monks of our Order.¹ I was struck by several things after reading it. First, Einstein's life was a graphic demonstration of Sri Ramakrishna's assertion that 'all jackals howl alike there', that is to say, mystics of all traditions speak in the same language. Second, Swami Vivekananda's belief that each one of us has a unique path to pursue a spiritual goal—that each one of us should represent 'a sect unto himself'.² This is the beauty and also the instructiveness of Einstein's life: his path was unique and yet his conclusions were consistent with the mystics and religious thinkers of all traditions and ages. I was particularly struck by how similar some of his beliefs were to those of Swami Vivekananda himself. When we find deeply spiritual or keenly insightful individuals from different traditions, neither knowing of the existence or thought of the other,

speaking essentially the same language, we feel much more confident that there is a universal set of ideas behind the transient phenomena of the universe—a truth that is at once transcendent and impersonal and yet shines through the veil of the universe for those with the mystical insight to experience it.

Swami Vivekananda was perhaps the greatest expounder of the doctrine of the four yogas, made famous through the publication of his writings and lectures under the titles *Raja Yoga*, *Karma Yoga*, *Jnana Yoga*, and *Bhakti Yoga*. Swamiji's idea was that each one of us has a natural tendency towards one of the different paths based on our temperament and character. At the same time, he realized that we all have an active aspect as well as a contemplative one, a meditative as well as a devotional one. Therefore, Swamiji felt that we can benefit by incorporating all of the yogas into our sadhana. We find this idea beautifully expressed in his oft-quoted preface to his *Raja Yoga*: 'Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free' (I.124).

Swami Vivekananda realized that each one of us is unique and our spiritual path reflects that uniqueness. This was especially true in the life of Albert Einstein. In a sense he was a nature mystic, since it was through contemplation of the natural world that he got a glimpse of the reality behind it. But it was not the experience of a Wordsworth, for example, who saw God in the beauty of nature. In many ways Einstein's beliefs were closest to the pantheistic views of the great philosopher Spinoza, and he often acknowledged that. Spinoza also was deeply moved by the order and beauty of nature. But for Einstein, it was the *mathematical* beauty of nature, the sublime order, the calculability of it that drew his mind to a divine Intelligence behind it. Ein-

stein never lost touch with his basic belief that no matter how advanced man becomes in his understanding of the workings of the universe, he will never be able to explain the divine mystery behind it. In one of his clearest statements regarding his own beliefs, he said:

The most beautiful emotion we can experience is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead, a snuffed-out candle. To sense that behind anything that can be experienced there is something that our minds cannot grasp, whose beauty and sublimity reaches us only indirectly: this is religiousness. In this sense, and in this sense only, I am a devoutly religious man.³

From many of Einstein's other statements we understand that the abiding belief in the Divine that he cherished was always based on a sense of transcendence, impersonality, and unity. This belief in the essential unity of all phenomena, as emanating from one divine source, was the ultimate impetus for his lifelong quest to discover a unified field theory of the universe and in his firm belief in time and space forming a unified continuum. It is also perfectly in line with Swamiji's statement: 'Every science must end where it finds a unity, because we cannot go any further. When a perfect unity is reached, that science has nothing more of principles to tell us. All the work that religions have to do is to work out the details.'⁴

From scriptures such as the Bhagavadgita, with its description of the *sthita-prajna*, sage of steady wisdom, and from the lives of great souls of modern days such as Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda we come to expect certain uniformity in terms of behav-

iour and thinking for such special individuals. Though Einstein may not merit mention in the same class such as these, we nevertheless find a great deal of conformity of conduct and views. In his personal life, Einstein was extremely humble and self-effacing, so much so that he stipulated in his will that his final resting place remain unknown so that it may not become a place of pilgrimage or of public interest. He had a legendary lack of interest in money, and endless stories are told about his indifference to it. It is said that when he first came to Princeton University and was asked to name his salary, he based his reply on the minimum amount he felt he could live on. His humility, disdain for name and praise, and simplicity are summed up in his statement: 'I am happy because I want nothing from anyone. I don't care for money. Decorations, titles or distinctions mean nothing to me. I don't crave praise. The only thing that gives me pleasure, apart from my work, my violin and my sailing boat, is the appreciation of my fellow-workers. I claim credit for nothing. I have no special gifts—I am only passionately curious.'⁵ Einstein was generous to a fault and often gave money to poor students and colleagues. One of the statements he was heard to repeat over and over again was: 'Only a life lived for others is worthwhile' (125). We can almost hear the words of Swamiji reflected through his utterance: 'But they alone live who live for others. The rest are more dead than alive.'⁶

Einstein's attitude towards education was also perfectly in line with Swami Vivekananda's. As a young man Einstein was a rather mediocre student. He was not particularly good at memorizing facts and figures, and developed a strong dislike for education that emphasized a mere accumulation of information. He felt that the main purpose of education was to inculcate morality into the students and to enable them to

think independently. His various remarks on the meaning of true education reveal his subtle understanding of the real value of education and echo the deep-seated beliefs of Swamiji. 'Education of the individual, in addition to promoting his own innate abilities, would attempt to develop in him a sense of responsibility for his fellow men in place of the glorification of power and success in our present society.' 'Accumulation of materials should not stifle the student's independence.' 'The value of a college education is not the learning of many facts but the training of the mind to think.'⁷

Albert Einstein's life was perhaps the best confirmation we have of Swamiji's conviction that all knowledge is within us and that all real discoveries are nothing but the uncovering of that knowledge. Einstein's laboratory was his own mind. He had the uncanny ability to formulate ideas and uncover the hidden secrets of the universe without resorting to conventional laboratories or experiments, but by examining his own inner thoughts. Even on his deathbed, he was seen to be working on solutions to the subtle workings of the universe simply with the help of paper and pencil.

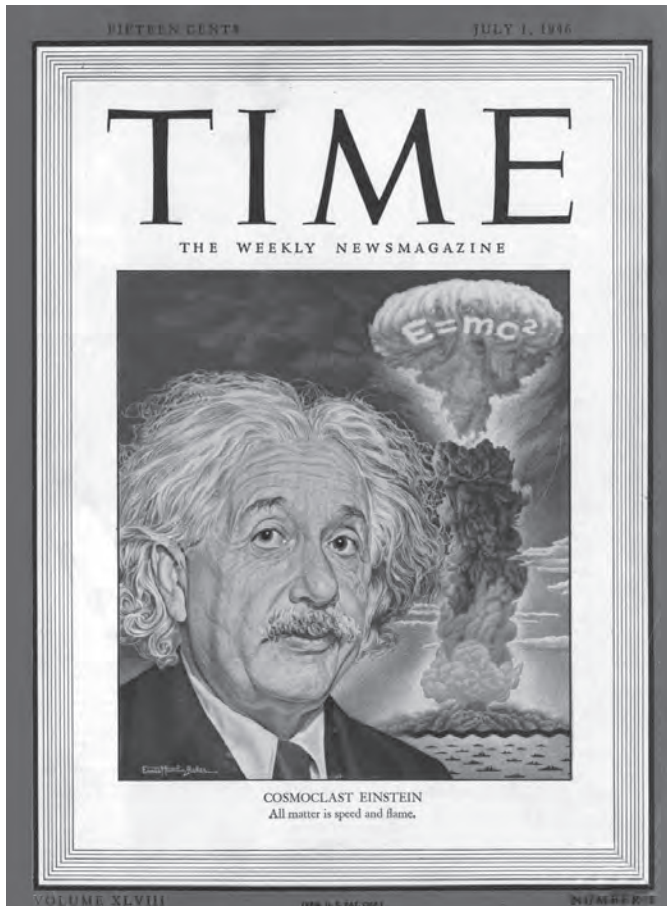
Einstein also had a very subtle and deep understanding of the limitations of the human mind in a way that is especially reminiscent of the great teachings of the Upanishads and the Gita as well as the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna. He said:

I do not at all believe in free will in the philosophical sense. Everybody acts not only under external compulsion but also in accordance with inner necessity. Schopenhauer's saying, 'A man can do as he wills, but not will as he wills', has been a real inspiration to me since my youth; it has been a continual consolation in the face of life's hardships, my own and others, and an unfailing wellspring of tolerance (115).

In this utterance we can clearly see an echo of the words of Sri Krishna to Arjuna: '*Sadrisham cheshtate svasyah prakriter-jnana-van-api, prakritim yanti bhutani nigrahah kim karishyati*; even a wise man behaves according to his own nature, beings follow (their) nature, what can restraint do?'⁸ This belief of Einstein was responsible for his humility, patience, and understanding with regard to the human frailties. He said: 'This realization mercifully mitigates the easily paralyzing sense of responsibility and prevents us from taking ourselves too seriously; it is conducive to a view of life, which, in particular, gives humor its due.'⁹ It is interesting to note that Einstein's response

to this restriction on free will was in perfect keeping with the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. He said: 'I am compelled to act as if free will existed because if I wish to live in a civilized society I must act responsibly' (115). Einstein's humility was remarkable in the face of his unprecedented scientific accomplishments and recognitions. A quality he shared with Newton who said: 'I do not know what I may appear to the world; but to myself I seem to have been only a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself now and then, finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than [the] ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me' (102).

Time cover of 1 July 1946



Einstein and the Atom Bomb

Though Einstein had an unyielding belief in non-violence, his name will forever be associated with his crucial role in the development of the atom bomb. This was the tragic irony that followed him to his grave. Einstein had a lifelong abhorrence for violence and an admiration for Gandhi and his non-violent philosophy that bordered on worship. It was Gandhi's picture that adorned his wall, and it was Gandhi alone among all politicians that he admired. He once remarked: 'I regard Gandhi as the only truly great figure of our age. ... generations to come, it may well be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon the earth' (122).

Einstein's reputation for his moral gravity was so great that he was sometimes referred to as the 'conscience of the world'. But his commitment to non-violence was tested with the onslaught of the Nazi invasion through Europe

and the prospects that they might develop an atomic weapon before the Western allies could. He concluded that it was of vital interest to the social order that the allies develop an atomic bomb before Germany did and lobbied for support for the project, though he himself played a very minor role in the actual development of the bomb. Ironically, it was his earlier commitment to non-violence that led some in the US government to question his patriotism, and he was often kept in the dark regarding the progress of the Manhattan Project. But Einstein was fully aware of the destruction the bomb would cause and wrote to President Roosevelt urging him not to use the bomb in the war against Japan. The tremendous devastation caused by the two bombs dropped on Japan led Einstein to devote much of the remaining portion of his life to the prevention of hostilities between countries and proliferation of nuclear weapons. He was a great believer in cooperation as opposed to competition and hoped for a world governing body that could help settle disputes as an alternative to war. And though he did not feel personal guilt due to his limited role in the development of the bomb, he did acknowledge his role in its creation and his responsibility to try to prevent its use. In an interview with the *New York Times* in 1948 he said: 'We scientists, whose tragic destiny it has been to help make the methods of annihilation ever more gruesome and more effective, must consider it our solemn and transcendent duty to do all in our power in preventing these weapons from being used for the brutal purpose for which they were invented. What task could possibly be more important to us? What social aim could be closer to our hearts?' (167).

Albert Einstein was a rare combination of scientific genius and mystic, with a deep sense of moral integrity. Was he a saint? By his own admission, no. He felt that he had been a failure

in his two marriages and was a self-described loner. Did he have a special insight into the hidden mysteries of the universe denied to the ordinary run of individual? Without question. His path was unique to him. Through his mathematical view of the universe, he was able to peep through to the limitless reality behind it. And that glimpse bestowed upon him a great sense of peace, transcendence, and wonder. At the same time, his insights were responsible for his deep humility, moral virtues, kindness, as well as perfect detachment from money, name and fame, and the ordinary pleasures of the world. His life is a great object lesson not simply for spiritual seekers, but for all sensitive souls trying to come to terms with the mystery of existence. It demonstrates that there is no limit to the ways in which one can pierce the veil of the phenomenal universe and experience the joy of transcendence, and that one need not follow any traditional path or conventional religion. As Sri Ramakrishna would say: 'God can be realized by means of all paths. It is enough to have sincere yearning for God. Infinite are the paths and infinite the opinions.'¹⁰



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Spiritual Training of the Mind

Swami Ranganathananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

NATURE WHISPERS to every human being. I have achieved one type of yoga for you in your body, achieve a second type of yoga for yourself at your higher level, which is the psychic level. This is homeostasis of the body. Achieve homeostasis of the inner life. That is the responsibility nature has thrown on us and given us the organic capacity to achieve it as well. That is the meaning of this cerebral system.

This wonderful cerebral system must be utilized to carry evolution to higher and higher levels. And the highest level is the spiritual freedom of man. You must be able to say: 'I am free, I am free.' That freedom is embedded within us, says Vedanta. It is there in the nature of the Atman. That is our true nature. The divine spark that is in all of us; that is the addition Vedanta gives. And you can achieve it now, in this very life, in this very body. Leave it to nature, and nature will achieve it for you; maybe hundred million years later, but you can do it today because you have got the cerebral system to help you. So, the training of the mind begins at that level for spiritual purposes. I must turn this energy system in that direction.

Achieving Freedom

How can I achieve freedom? How can I achieve joy, peace, fulfilment? Only through this mind; if this mind is properly trained, you will get it. If not, you will be like the boat with a broken rudder, getting wrecked all the time. So, the mind has two states. In a mantra of the Upanishads: *Mano hi dvividham proktam shuddham cha ashuddham*

*eva cha; ashuddham kama-sankalpam shuddham kama-vivarjitam.*³ Mind exists in two states: in a pure state and in an impure state. What is the impure state? The impure state is when it is mixed up with the sensory system and the cravings of the sensory system; the mind is completely involved in it. Mind has ceased to be mind thereby. It has become diluted. That is the nature of the mind in that impure state. The same mind, when it is freed from that thralldom to the sensory system, it becomes pure. Before, it is mixed up, now it is pure. This pure state has to be achieved by every human being. It is a whole science, it is a whole technique. Much of it you will get in world's religions. Only you will have to choose carefully, because religions contain many extraneous things also. These things are there in the heart of every religion. And the great mystics of every religion have tried to handle these things; achieved great results also.

This search for freedom, this search for God, search for the Immortal—all these are the same. God alone is immortal. God alone is free. And that God is hidden within us. That's the Vedantic teaching. All mystics have taught that the profound spiritual dimension is hidden in every human being. Immortality is hidden within you. Mortality is already present within you. Both are there in you, says the Mahabharata: *Amritam chaiva mrityushcha dvayam dehe pratishthitam; mrityum-apadyate mohat satyenapadyate'mritam.*⁴ What a clear statement! Both mortality and immortality are established in this human body. Both are there within this human system. By pursuit of delusion you get mortality; by pursuit of truth you

get immortality. That is the language. So, when you are training the mind for spiritual life, you are going towards the truth. How to achieve it? How to become truly free? How to become immortal? And when you become immortal, you become fearless. Wherever there is mortality there is fear. We have so many fears in life. But the most important fear is the fear of death. Always we want to defend ourselves so that when this knowledge comes, when this experience is achieved, you get fearlessness, absolute fearlessness. Knowledge destroys fear. There is a big statement in all science. The primitive man had so many fears, the thunder, lightning—everything is a source of fear to a man who is ignorant of nature. Today's scientist is not afraid of nature, not only he is not afraid he controls nature, uses it for his own purpose. That is why he is not afraid of nature outside. Knowledge destroys fear. It is a beautiful statement. But we have to understand it a little more closely.

Scientific knowledge destroys only some fear, but not all fear. When some fear is overcome, other fears come into the picture. That is the world today. We have no fear as the primitive people had. But we have our own fears, nameless fears. In fact, the most characteristic state of mind of most modern people is fear—what you call tension, what you call stress. All these are nothing but fear. Various aspects of fear—tension, stress, frustration, boredom—these are all various aspects of fear itself. That is why this fear is gnawing into the heart of man. A civilized man doesn't die from ordinary physical ailments. He dies from mental ailments, invisible ailments—what you call psychosomatic ailments, not merely somatic. So here you can see that knowledge has destroyed some fear, but other fears are still waiting to be destroyed.

The spiritual training of the mind helps us to handle that particular subject, nothing else can handle it. More of physical science, more of in-

dustry, more of gadgets is not going to help us in training the mind in fearlessness. It is only through spiritual training that fearlessness can come. But we must emphasize the point that knowledge of the physical world, control of its energies, can make us fearless to some extent. While I was reading a book on scientific method, I found an example of the fearlessness that comes to us when you know what nature is.

Less baggage is needed while going to Mount Everest, how little we carry as we go higher and higher. In the beginning, in the lower base camps, we can carry much baggage. But every step you go up you reduce the baggage. Only you climb, without the baggage. This reduction—natural, spontaneous—is because you want to achieve the highest; it is called renunciation.

Renunciation is the greatest strength in training the mind for spiritual development, because the mind has to go up. It is pulled down. What is it that pulls down? Our old desires are the worst gravitational pulls on the mind; they pull the mind down. Therefore, it is not able to go up.

Sri Ramakrishna used to speak of people who keep a pet mongoose in their home, and that mongoose moves about here and there. It can also sit on a ledge and get a little joy. But a big weight is tied to it all the time. It sits there for some time, then this weight pulls, and it has to come down, it cannot sit too long there because that weight is on it. The human mind is like that, so much of weight is on it. It jumps up a little, again it has to come down. It is that weight we have to handle. There is a tremendous weight on us. In Sanskrit we call it *samskara*, *vasana*, innate tendencies that the mind has accumulated for all these many births; at least in this birth it is there. These are to be handled. We have also the evolutionary slime still sticking to us. The past evolution is still with us. So many things are in

this mind. This mind has to be purified, has to be cleansed. Then only it is fit for climbing high.

That's why in all spiritual teachings 'blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God' is the supreme truth. Vivekananda said that the whole of religion can be put in this one sentence: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' The biggest training of the mind is how to make it pure. We have nothing else to do. The pure mind immediately realizes the truth about itself, that it is the Atman, it is the infinite One. When it is all diluted, mixed, this knowledge doesn't come to you. So, the whole object in spiritual training is to purify this mind. Everything else is secondary.

Vivekananda asks to look at a mirror, it is full of dirt, full of dust. You can't see your face. Wipe the mirror. You have nothing else to do. Automatically the face will be visible there. Rubbing the mirror is cleaning the mind. Here is the mind, let me make it fine. All the practices suggested in religion are ultimately meant to purify this mind, and purification in this context means that it should not be diluted with sensory material. Sensory material is what it handles from a free point of view. It should not itself contain sensory material.

There is a method to remove a ghost from a person. They bring a little mustard. One man was possessed by a ghost and they got a man who knows how to exorcise ghosts. He said, 'Give me some mustard seeds, I need it for exorcism.' Even after a long time the ghost did not leave. 'What is this! I am an expert. Why this has happened?' Then, they investigated and found that a ghost has entered into the mustard already. How can those mustard seeds help us to remove this ghost? Similarly, if the human mind is full of sensory values, how can the mind become mind? How can it turn to the higher dimension? So, the whole training is to make the mind pure. When the mind is pure, life's objective is achieved then and there. *Vishuddhe sati*

chaitasmin-mukti karaphalayate, Shankara says in the *Vivekachudamani*, the crest-jewel of discrimination. He says: *Tan-manah-shodhanam karyam prayatnena mumukshuna; vishuddhe sati chaitasmin-mukti karaphalayate*.⁵ The control and discipline and purification of the mind must be done by every spiritual aspirant. Once it is achieved, salvation or liberation or freedom comes to you automatically, like a fruit in the palm of one's hand. As palpable as a fruit in the palm of one's hand will be freedom. This is the only thing that we have to do.

Experience Yourself

What's the nature of training the mind for such spiritual development? First of all we must remember that trying to develop the mind for a spiritual purpose is not an isolated action. The work that we do, the life that we lead, the human interactions that we engage ourselves in also must be taken into account in trying to train the mind for spiritual life. Not only meditation but also action constitutes the totality of the field for training the mind. People generally think that the spiritual training of the mind is only through meditation. It is only one item. If I don't take account of the work that I do and the human situations I deal with, I shall be gaining something in the meditation and losing the same thing at the time of work; no spiritual progress can come. There must be a constant interaction between inner life and outer life, between meditation and the action that we do all the time. Unless that is done, progress becomes difficult. We may gain some, and we may lose some. A slippery ladder the monkey climbs—three feet up, four feet down—that kind of thing should not happen. Therefore, the Bhagavadgita and other great books tell us: Take care of your daily life. See that mind is spiritual even there. Also try to do good to the world, try to be kind; that kind of training

is needed to sustain the training that we achieve in spiritual life. In this inner life we have that supreme training, namely meditation.

We are in search of something beyond the sensory level. If all the truth is present at the sensory level there is no fun in going to meditate, no fun in going beyond the sensory level. You can keep the eyes wide open to take in whatever reality is there. But our mind tells us that what is revealed by the senses is only a fraction of the true reality. Many things are beyond the sensory level. Therefore, we go beyond the sensory level. We say goodbye to the sense organs. That is what we do when we sit in meditation or prayer. Goodbye to the sense organs. We close the eyes, close the ears, close the other sense organs, because I know I have achieved whatever I can get from here. Comfort, pleasure, a cultured existence I have got; a good life I have got, even ethical life I have got in the social context; but that is not enough. I want to penetrate to the heart of reality to clear the mystery that is there—I don't know my own true nature. So, after finishing my activities here I quietly sit down for another activity. That is also activity, though it looks like inactivity. That inactivity that is truly activity is called meditation.

A very worldly man sitting quietly in meditation means laziness, just inactivity. This was the condition in the West fifty years ago. Anyone sitting in quiet meditation in a corner, everybody will say, 'Either he is crazy or he is lazy', nothing better than that. But after fifty years a tremendous change has come. We do realize that that man sitting there, with eyes closed, absolutely quiet, is at something big. Something big is going on. That knowledge has come today. That's the meaning of meditation and its spiritual significance—that an inward penetration is being attempted to discover some profound truth hidden within oneself.

When a man sits in meditation, how shall we

view him? Sri Ramakrishna speaks of angling as an illustration for meditation. If you want to understand meditation, study a man who is going for fishing. He takes his tackle, he puts the bait, he goes to a lake and puts it in, throws it in and sits quietly—very steady, no movement at all, absolutely quiet. Even if a procession goes behind, he will not know it at all. That is the attention he is giving there. And what is the mark there: he finds that the float is trembling, that means a fish is nibbling at the bait. That shows something is happening. All the more attention he gives. Then, a heavy pull on that bait, that means a fish has been caught. He lifts it and the fish is in his hand.

God realization through spiritual practice is exactly like this, said Sri Ramakrishna. You put a bait and wait. In bhakti religion that bait is bhakti itself, love of God. Love of God is the bait that makes God come and nibble at your bait. Then, you know you are going to have God in your grip. Through meditation this experience becomes possible. Millions of people have realized this profound spiritual dimension through their spiritual lives. The Gita gives us this testament in a famous verse. A similar testament occurs in the *Mandukya Karika* of Gaudapada on the *Mandukya Upanishad*. The Gita shloka says: *Vitaraga-bhaya-krodha*

Go on repeating His name with full sincerity, and you will find that meditation will follow as a natural development. When one goes on repeating the name of the Chosen Deity with intense love, one becomes gradually filled with an ineffable bliss. When that bliss becomes continuous, it is also a kind of meditation. Meditations are of various kinds. Go on meditating on the blessed, effulgent form of the Lord with the greatest love, and imagine that every recess of your heart shines with the light emanating from His form.

—For Seekers of God,

Spiritual Talks of Mahapurush Swami Shivananda, 161

*manmaya mam-upashritah; bahavo jnana-tapasa puta madbhavamagatah.*⁶ Hundreds of people have realized Me as the Self of all. How did they do so? *Vitaraga-bhaya-krodha*; they overcame the emotions of fear, anger, attachment—worldly attachment. These three obstruct the vision of the mind of every human being. So *raga, bhaya, krodha*—worldly attachment, fear, and anger. Even fear is included as an emotion that must be overcome if you want to achieve spiritual development. *Vitaraga-bhaya-krodha manmaya mam-upashritah; bahavo jnana-tapasa puta*—purified in the *tapas* of jnana, *tapas* of spiritual effort and struggle, men and women have achieved Me in hundreds before. It is not a new adventure. Just like fishing in the lake. How many people have done fishing! How many have caught the fish! The fish is there. Your effort is quite meaningful, only you may not get it immediately; you have to use the proper technique.

A similar verse occurs in the *Mandukya Karika*: *Vitaraga-bhaya-krodhair-munibhir-veda-paragaih; nirvikalpo hy-ayam drishtah pra panchopashamo'dvayah.*⁷ This Advaitic state of non-duality; this state of non-duality has been realized by many, many people when they overcame attachment, fear, and anger, and they also were beyond the mandate of scriptures and do's and don'ts. That is a beautiful expression in the verse: *Vitaraga-bhaya-krodhair-munibhih*—profound thinking people, investigating mind they have, *munibhih*. *Veda-paragaih*—they have gone beyond the Vedas, beyond the Bible, beyond the Koran. What does it mean? In the Bible, in the Vedas, in the Koran, you are in the world of words—words, words, words—information only. But they are now going to experiment with the truth; these books are of no use. Understand what books contain and then experiment. Just like a scientist will tell a research student that this is the way to seek; 'seek there,' and gives him

also guidance. Then he throws all this away; then the actual research starts. Similarly read the scriptures, know what they contain, then throw the scriptures away. They will be of no use to you. You become a seeker yourself, experiment yourself. That's the language used here. Throughout the Hindu tradition this emphasis is always there. Use the Vedas but go beyond the Vedas, beyond the mandate of any tradition. Because you must experiment and experience the truth yourself. Second-hand knowledge is no religion. So the Vedas themselves tell you, go beyond the Vedas. No other scripture in the world has ever this daring to say go beyond the scripture because the aim of Vedanta is to realize truth, not merely to believe in a creed or a doctrine. So it is said, 'go beyond'. *Veda-paragaih*—those who have gone beyond the Vedas. The Vedas contain only information about God, so also the Koran or the Bible. Just like Sri Ramakrishna said: The almanac often forecasts rainfall of the year, saying this year there will be twenty inches of rainfall; but he adds with a chuckle, if you squeeze the almanac you won't get a drop of water. Similarly, squeeze the Vedas, you won't get God; squeeze the Koran, you won't get; squeeze your own experience, you will get. Experiment, experience, that's the stress. *Nirvikalpo hy-ayam drishtah*—by such people this *nirvikalpa* state, the samadhi of the transcendental type, has been achieved. *Pra-panchopashamo*—where this duality of the world, this relativity of existence has been completely eliminated. *Advayah*—that non-dual state.

This is a language of conviction. It is a truth being communicated, you are doing something right; you are not on a wild goose chase. Just like that fisherman sitting there. He is not on a wild goose chase. You may not get a fish immediately, but if you persist, you are sure to get, because others have got it. There is fish in the lake, with that conviction only you go on. The scientist has

a conviction that there is truth hidden in external nature. If that conviction were not there, he won't go and become a scientist. Because he knows it is there, by faith he goes to realize the truth of that faith and he discovers the truth and says, 'Yes, it is right; the world is meaningful. I have discovered its soul.' Similarly, in the inner field, the experience beyond the sensory level, there is a profound truth lying in wait for you and me. So, like the fisherman putting the bait trying to catch a fish, we meditate, just to catch that fish.

Infinity is hidden within man himself. That's a beautiful illustration of meditation. Control the senses, calm the mind, and then something great will happen. When the mind is calm and steady then it is pure; just the truth shines in it because the truth is already there. The infinite is already there behind the finite. The Atman is our true nature. But this mind, which is now in that impure state, is not able to feel the touch of the Atman. But when it is pure, it is able to realize that truth. The memory of one's divine nature becomes constant when the mind is pure, when the mind is clear. That is how Vedanta explains this wonderful adventure to realize God in this human life, in this very life, in this very body, not in a post-mortem condition. The entire spiritual training of the mind is meant to give us a taste of our own divine nature. Our own perfect nature, which is hidden now but it will become patent when we direct our attention in that direction. Meditation, prayer, repetition of God's name, reading holy books, singing hymns—all these constitute one entire spectrum of spiritual training. It is a laboratory that we just established in our mind or the little room for meditation in a house.

The Laboratory of the Mind

Vivekananda said in America, when he spoke about the spiritual training of the mind: Have a little corner at home where you can practice the

spiritual training in the inwardness of meditation. It needn't be a big thing; a room, a small corner. But it must be independent, it must be clean, it must be pure, its atmosphere must be entirely elevating. Don't have worldly talk in that room, Vivekananda used to say. Keep flowers, keep incense because that creates a particular atmosphere, which can stimulate the mind. Put many pictures of holy people, that also can give inspiration. Just like in a physics laboratory, you always put a photo of Einstein, Heisenberg, which are very inspiring for the students in that particular line. So also here. A Buddha, a Jesus, a Sri Ramakrishna; the picture is there, very inspiring, because they have done it. They will inspire me to achieve it. Treat this room as a laboratory. There are two laboratories for spiritual development: One is that room, meditation room; the other is one's own mind. Both are laboratories. And we can experiment on the subject of spiritual growth and fulfilment through these two laboratories.

Meditate, and when you are tired of meditation repeat the Lord's name, or read a holy book, or sing some bhajans or hymns. All these constitute that particular spiritual practice. But it must be done systematically, in time, as much time as you can spend. Each person has his own limitation, sometimes more sometimes less; but whatever it is, let it be done at the correct time to train the mind in that particular direction. Then, when you finish your meditation, enter the world of work. Never forget that atmosphere. Carry with you that atmosphere, then only we can have a full training of the mind.

(To be concluded)

References

3. *Amritabindu Upanishad*, 1.
4. *Mahabharata*, 12.170.28.
5. Shankaracharya, *Vivekachudamani*, 181.
6. *Bhagavadgita*, 4.10.
7. *Mandukya Karika*, 2.35.

Vedanta-sara

Swami Bhaskareswarananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

116. Atrāpy-anayoḥ sthūla-vyaṣṭi-samaṣṭyos-tad-upahita-viśva-vaiśvānarayoś-ca vana-vṛkṣavat-tad-avacchinnākāśavac-ca jalāśaya-jalavat-tad-gata-pratibimba-ākāśavac-ca pūrvavad-abhedah.

Here also the individual and collective gross bodies are identical as before, like the trees and the forest, or like the quantities of water and the lake; and so are viśva and Vaiśvānara, which are respectively associated with those bodies, non-different, like the spaces enclosed by the trees and the forest, or like the reflections of the sky in the quantities of water and the lake.

117. Evaṁ pañcīkṛta-pañca-bhūtebhyah sthūla-prapañcotpattiḥ.

Thus has the gross phenomenal universe evolved from the five compounded elements.

HERE AGAIN THE IDENTITY of the individual and the collective is shown. Its practical implication is that if you have attachment to your body and try to make it look more beautiful, using garlands and ornaments, you will have attraction for others' bodies and will look for physical beauty. This will lead to desire for enjoyment. But if you have the consciousness through proper understanding that these bodies are illusory, then you will be able to transcend all bodies. The spiritual aspirant must lead his life based on such a renunciation born out of knowledge. His calm mind thus free from worldly reactions, drags, and digressions will be able to experience spiritual truths.

118. Eteṣāṁ sthūla-sūkṣma-kāraṇa-prapañcānām-api samaṣṭir-eko mahān-prapañco bhavati yathāvāntara-vanānāṁ samaṣṭir-ekaṁ mahad-vanam bhavati yathā-vāvāntara-jalāśayānāṁ samaṣṭir-eko mahān jalāśayaḥ.

The sum total of the gross, subtle, and causal worlds make a vast universe, as the sum total of smaller forests makes a vast forest, or a collection of smaller lakes makes a vast expanse of water.

By the term 'world' we generally understand the physical expanse of the earth that we know. But this is not the actual world. Our concept of the world depends upon our mental conditioning and limitations. For some people, the world is limited only to their family. Others, a little more developed mentally, consider their village as their world. Those still more developed consider their district, and still others their community, as the world. Finally, there are those for whom the whole humanity is their world. Thus, our mental limitations determine our concept of the world.

The Upanishadic rishis knew that we will not be able to conceive the highest concept of the universe all at once. Hence, in Vedantic literature, our outlook is gradually broadened through the description of the evolution of Brahman; the causal, the subtle, and finally the gross universe have been described one after the other. It has also been shown that just as God resides within our gross body, similarly he resides also in the collective gross bodies. Yet, this is only a limited description. The realization or experience of God

as Virat or *viśva*, as in the vision Sri Krishna gave to Arjuna, is only a limited experience, not the 'absolute realization.' Arjuna saw all creatures with form arising from Sri Krishna and again merging in him. Sri Krishna affirmed that the Virat form seen by Arjuna was not his full manifestation. The universal vision must not be limited merely to the gross universe, it must include the subtle and the causal as well. Therefore, here it is said that the whole of the gross, subtle, and causal universes together form the *mahā-prapañca*, vast universe.

Through spiritual practice your vision will widen and you will go from the gross to the subtle and then to the causal. Consequently, you will truly become unselfish. This is the universal outlook. There is a vast difference between the unselfishness of a monk and that of a patriot. The patriot's outlook is limited by his physical country, whereas the outlook of the monk is all-comprehensive, covering the gross, the subtle, and the causal—all the three aspects—and even Brahman behind them. Swami Vivekananda's unselfishness is entirely different from Gandhi's or Nehru's. Swamiji's outlook was entirely idealistic. He saw Brahman everywhere. With this consciousness that the gross, the subtle, and the causal are aspects of Brahman, true unselfishness will come. That occurs only after the knowledge of Brahman.

119. Etad-upahitaṁ vaiśvānarādīśvara-paryantaṁ caitanyam-apy-avāntara-vanāvachchinnākāśavad-avāntara-jalāśaya-gata-pratibimbākāśavac-caikam-eva.

Consciousness associated with this, from Vaishvanara to Ishvara, is also one and the same, as the space enclosed by a number of smaller forests is the same as that enclosed by the big forest of which they form part, or as the sky reflected in different smaller lakes is the same as that reflected in the vast expanse of water which they form.

In all the three planes of existence—*sthūla*, *sūkṣma*, and *kāraṇa*—the one Reality alone is sporting; three different names are given only for technical convenience. Hence, one must have a holistic concept encompassing the whole of the gross, the differentiated subtle, and undifferentiated causal universe. This is the idealistic attitude.

120. Ābhyām mahā-prapañca-tad-upahita-caitanyābhyām taptāyaḥ-piṇḍavad-aviviktaṁ sad-anupahitaṁ caitanyam 'sarvaṁ khalvidaṁ brahma' iti [mahā] vākyasya vācyaṁ bhavati viviktaṁ sal-lakṣyam-api bhavati.

Consciousness, unassociated with any adjuncts, upadhis, whatsoever, when not differentiated—like the red-hot iron-ball (from the heat associated with it)—from the vast universe and the Consciousness associated with it becomes the direct import of the great Vedic dictum 'all this is verily Brahman' (Chhandogya Upanishad, 3.14.1), and when differentiated from them it becomes the implied meaning of that text.

121. Evaṁ vastuny-avastvāropo'dhyāropaḥ sāmānyena pradarśitaḥ.

Thus has been shown, in general, the process of superimposition, which is the attribution of unreality to the real.

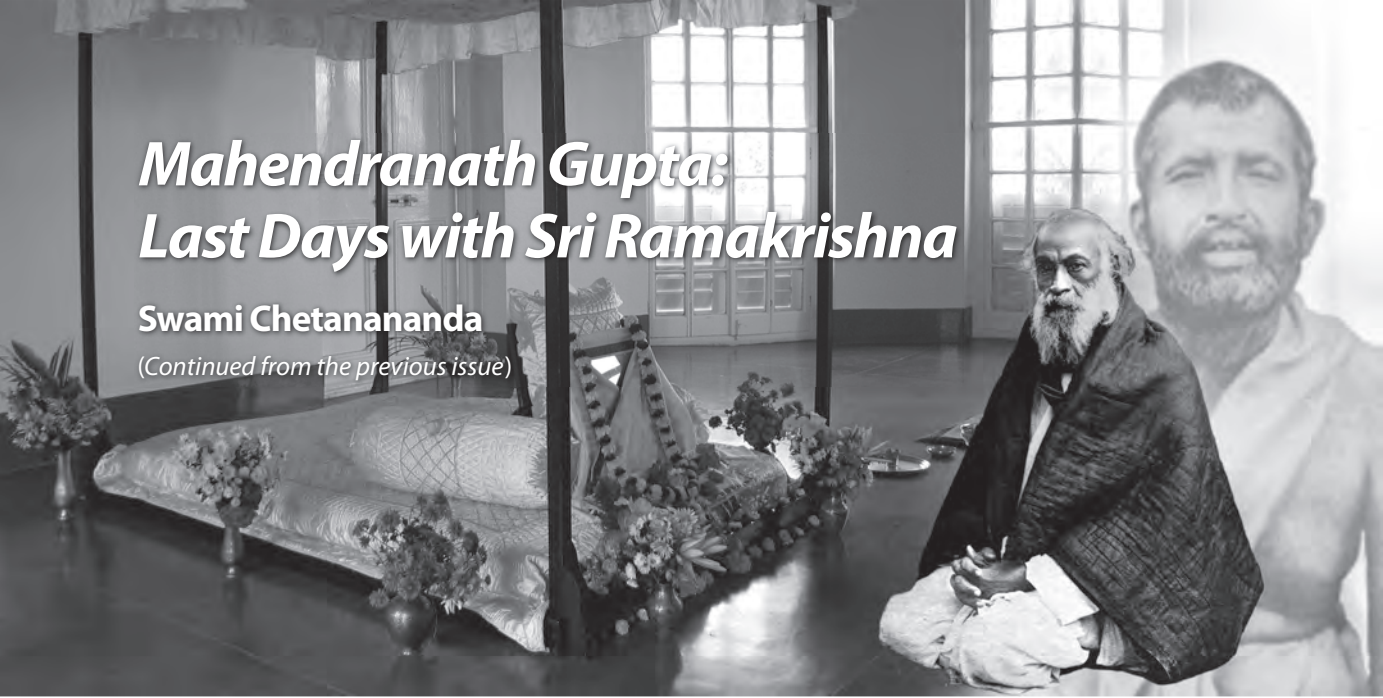
Brahman alone is the Reality, which has manifested as the three universes. Brahman and the universe are absolutely one; but in which sense? Not in the literal sense. For example, a red-hot iron-ball 'appears' as fire, but it is not actually fire. Similarly, the universe is not Brahman expressed directly, literally; only in its implied meaning, *lakṣyārtha*, is this assertion valid. If you are able to live according to the concept that God alone is sporting as the 'vast universe', then you are indeed an ideal person.

(To be temporarily discontinued)

Mahendranath Gupta: Last Days with Sri Ramakrishna

Swami Chetanananda

(Continued from the previous issue)



MONDAY, 22 MARCH 1886 • While M was in Kashipur, the Master asked Shashi to bring some sanctified water of the Divine Mother from his father, who was a tantric worshipper. M gave the carriage fare to Shashi. During M's absence Vijaykrishna Goswami came and the Master blessed him by touching his chest.

Thursday, 25 March 1886 • M went to Kashipur after work and found Dr Rajendralal Datta, Surendra, and Senior Gopal in the Master's room. He was feeling better. Dr Datta examined him, prescribed medicine—*Lycopodium* 200—and suggested a new diet. That evening the Master had vermicelli and milk for supper.

Tuesday, 30 March 1886 • The Master was lying in his bed. A ten-year-old boy named Patu was massaging his feet. 'This boy had ecstasy,' the Master said to M. 'How wonderful! He is so young!' The Master was cold, so the attendant covered him with a chadar.

Wednesday, 31 March 1886 • Dr Rajendralal Datta came to examine the Master, even though the doctor himself was feeling ill. Sureshchandra Datta also came with his daughter. M was about

to leave the room, but the Master asked him to massage his feet.

Thursday, 1 April 1886 • Narendra, Tarak, and Kali left for Bodh Gaya to practise austerities. The Master was concerned. He said: 'Narendra is my crown jewel. He will give up his body if he knows who he is. Narendra is one of the seven sages; he is anxious to know his true self.'

M left for Vidyasagar's school and returned to Kashipur in the afternoon. It was an auspicious day for bathing in the Ganga, so he took his bath there and brought some holy water for the Master. At night M returned home.

Monday, 5 April 1886 • When M arrived at 9.00 p.m. Baburam told him that the Master had cried for Narendra. The Master then consoled the attendants, saying: 'Why are you anxious? Where will Naren go? How long will he stay away? Just wait. He will be back soon.' Then he said with a smile: 'Travel in all four directions. You will not find anything (true spirituality) anywhere. Whatever exists is here (*pointing to his body*).'²¹ M stayed the night.

Tuesday, 6 April 1886 • Early in the morning M entered the Master's room and found him

sleeping. He silently bowed down to him and left for Calcutta. On his way, however, he saw Dr Rajendralal Datta coming to Kashipur by carriage, so M returned with him. Dr Datta examined the Master and was pleased to learn that his pain had subsided. When the doctor left, Sri Ramakrishna told M some stories of his boyhood days. They had a long conversation. M informed the Master that his wife's mental illness had worsened, but she behaved normally when she came to Kashipur. The compassionate Master asked M to bring her to stay with Holy Mother for a month.

Thursday, 8 April 1886 • Narendra, Tarak, and Kali returned from Bodh Gaya and the Master joyfully enquired about their experiences.

Friday, 9 April 1886 • At 5.30 p.m. M arrived and the Master asked him to buy a chadar and a pair of slippers. Narendra explained Buddha's life and experiences to the Master. The Master took the fan from M's hand and said: 'As I see this fan, *directly* before me, in exactly the same manner have I seen God. ... I have seen that He and the one who dwells in my heart are one and the same Person.'²²

When the disciples went downstairs, Shashi brought a piece of paper where the Master had written: '[Mother,] please give knowledge to Narendra.' Below that he drew a tiger and a horse. On the reverse page, the Master sketched a woman with a braid.

Monday, 12 April 1886 • Narendra criticized Hindu superstitions about food and said that after attaining the knowledge of Brahman one can accept food from anyone. With this in mind he took some of his brother disciples to Piru's restaurant in Calcutta and fed them chicken curry. When the Master heard of their adventure, he laughed and said: 'Very well, you are now free from superstition.'

In the evening, when M was fanning the Master, he said by signs: 'Get a stone cup for me

that will hold a quarter of a seer of milk—white stone. ... When eating from other bowls I get the smell of fish' (950).

Tuesday, 13 April 1886 • It was the Bengali New Year Day and also Ramnavami, the birthday of Bhagavan Ramachandra. Dr Rajendralal Datta, Dr Srinath, Ramchandra, and many devotees assembled to pay their homage to the Master. M had stayed with the Master the previous night. His wife and two nieces, Balaram's wife, Golap-ma, and other women devotees arrived in the morning. The two girls and Golap-ma sang songs and entertained the Master, who was in a great mood.

At 8.00 p.m. Surendra arrived from his office and offered the Master four oranges and two garlands. 'Today is the first day of the year,' Surendra said. 'It is also Tuesday, an auspicious day to worship the Divine Mother. But I didn't go to Kali-ghat. I said to myself: "It will be enough if I see him who is Kali Herself, and who has rightly understood Kali."' The Master smiled and praised Surendra's devotion (954).

Friday, 16 April 1886 • It was evening. Girish, M, Latu, and a few devotees were seated on the steps leading to the pond. They went to the Master's room. He was feeling better. He asked Latu to give some refreshments to Girish and, despite his illness, he poured a glass of water and gave it to Girish himself. He and Girish had a wonderful conversation.

Girish: 'Think what I was before, and see what I have become now by meditating on you! Formerly I was indolent; now that indolence has turned into resignation to God. Formerly I was a sinner; now I have become humble. What else can I say?' (958).

Saturday, 17 April 1886 • It was the night of the full moon. M arrived at 8.00 p.m. He met Narendra, who was going to Dakshineswar to meditate, as he did every night. M went to the

Master's room. The Master asked him to wash his towel and the spittoon. M washed them in the pond (959).

Sunday, 18 April 1886 • M had stayed the previous night. In the morning he bathed in the Ganga and then returned to the Master's room. The Master was feeling well. He asked M to bring his grief-stricken wife to stay at Kashipur for a couple of days, along with his youngest child. It was about 9.00 a.m. M and Narendra had a long conversation about the existence of God as Sri Ramakrishna watched. Dr Rajendralal Datta arrived and examined the Master. Some devotees began to sing kirtan on the ghat of the reservoir and the Master asked M and Baburam to join them (959–61).

Tuesday, 20 April 1886 • Dr Datta's treatment had temporarily arrested the Master's disease, although he continued to consult Dr Sarkar as well. The Master had several visitors, including Mani Mallick, Sharat's brother Charu, and Tulsi Babu. M and Tulsi Babu left for Calcutta together.

Wednesday, 21 April 1886 • When M arrived at Kashipur he saw Hirananda, a devotee from Sindh, in a horse carriage; Narendra and Rakhal were seeing him off. He had come from Sindh to see the Master. M had a fascinating talk with Narendra about the existence of God. At 4.00 p.m. the Master asked M to close the window and massage his feet. Purna came to visit the Master; M gave some money to Gopal for Purna's carriage fare. At 9.00 p.m. M left with Ramchandra and Surendra (962–3).

Thursday, 22 April 1886 • In the evening Dr Rajendralal Datta and Dr Sarkar came to evaluate the Master's condition.

Master (*to Dr Sarkar and the others*): 'The expenses are mounting.'

Dr Sarkar (*pointing to the devotees*): 'But they are ready to bear them. They do not hesitate to spend money. (*To Sri Ramakrishna*)

Now, you see, gold is necessary.'

Master (*to Narendra*): 'Why don't you answer?'

Narendra remained silent. Dr Sarkar resumed the conversation.

Dr Sarkar: 'Gold is necessary, and also woman.'

Rajendra: 'Yes, his [meaning Sri Ramakrishna's] wife has been cooking his meals.'

Dr Sarkar (*to the Master*): 'Do you see?'

Master (*smiling*): 'Yes—but very troublesome.'

Dr Sarkar: 'If there were no troubles, then all would become paramahansas.' ...

A few minutes later the physicians took their leave. ...

Master (*to M*): 'They say I cannot get along without "woman and gold". They don't understand the state of my mind' (964–5).

Hirananda and two of his friends came to see Sri Ramakrishna. He had a long conversation with Narendra in front of the Master, which M recorded in the *Gospel*. Finally the Master said to Hirananda: 'My mood is changing. I think that I should not say to everyone, "May your spiritual consciousness be awakened". People are so sinful in the Kaliyuga; if I awaken their spiritual consciousness I shall have to accept the burden of their sins' (970).

Friday, 23 April 1886 • Hirananda and two of his Brahmo friends had lunch at Kashipur. Hirananda massaged the Master's feet and told him that he would send him a pair of pyjamas that would be more comfortable during summer. The Master was deeply moved that Hirananda had come to see him from Sindh, which is 2,200 miles from Calcutta.

It was Good Friday, so many devotees came to see the Master (970–3).

Saturday, 24 April 1886 • The following is the last entry in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* while the Master was alive.

M came to the garden-house accompanied by his wife and a son. The boy was seven years old. It was at the Master's request that he brought his wife, who was almost mad with grief owing to the death of one of her sons.

That day the Master several times allowed M's wife the privilege of waiting on him. Her welfare seemed to occupy his attention a great deal. In the evening the Holy Mother came to the Master's room to feed him. M's wife accompanied her with a lamp. The Master tenderly asked her many questions about her household. He requested her to come again to the garden-house and spend a few days with the Holy Mother, not forgetting to ask her to bring her baby daughter. When the Master had finished his meal M's wife removed the plates. He chatted with her a few minutes.

About nine o'clock in the evening Sri Ramakrishna was seated in his room with the devotees. He had a garland of flowers around his neck. He told M that he had requested his wife to spend a few days at the garden-house with the Holy Mother. His kindness touched M's heart.

M was fanning him. The Master took the garland from his neck and said something to himself. Then in a very benign mood he gave the garland to M (973-4).

Monday, 26 April 1886 • The Master was feeling better, which gave his attendants and devotees some hope. M was going to Baranagore with his wife and daughter Manamayi to attend a marriage ceremony. On the way he stopped at Kashipur and visited the Master. After this M and his wife stayed with the Master for a week.

Thursday, 6 May 1886 • M and his wife came to visit Sri Ramakrishna for the day.

Monday, 17 May 1886 • M went to Darjeeling for a few days. After returning to Calcutta, he went straight to see the Master at Kashipur, where he was told that the Master's condition had worsened. He bowed down to him. It was 5.00 p.m.

The Master asked: 'Did the sight of the Himalayas remind you of God?' The Master further enquired about his meditation, vision, and spiritual awakening in Darjeeling. Sri Ramakrishna had once said that one should see the Himalayas and the ocean to get a glimpse of the infinite. Balaram had arranged a festival and a feast, and invited all the devotees. The Master asked M to go to Balaram's house. After attending the festival M returned to Kashipur and stayed with the Master.

Tuesday, 18 May 1886 • M and some attendants were in the Master's room. Narendra pronounced the worldly life to be bad and full of selfishness. He advised M to renounce the world.

Wednesday, 19 May 1886 • Early in the morning M bathed in the Ganges and then bowed down to the Master.

Master: 'Will you take lunch here?'

M: 'No, sir. I shall have to return home.'

Master: 'All right, please go home then.'

Thursday, 20 May 1886 • This was a difficult day, crucial to M's future. The examination results for M's school that year were not very good, and Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar was unhappy. He called on M to complain. He said that M was not doing his duty properly as the headmaster and that it was due to his negligence that the students had had such poor results. Vidyasagar also accused M of visiting Sri Ramakrishna too frequently and neglecting his duties.

M was deeply hurt because Vidyasagar had included the Master in his complaints. Controlling himself, he went home to make a decision.

Friday, 21 May 1886 • M wrote a letter of resignation to Vidyasagar. He knew very well that without the job his family would suffer and he would no longer be able to serve the Master financially. However, he could not bear any criticism levelled at his guru. He went to Kashipur and told the Master the whole story. 'You have done the right thing,' the Master responded.

M later recalled how the Master's grace saved the situation:

I lost my job. I was pacing on the upper veranda of Thakur Bari like a half-mad person. I was worried about how I could feed my children. But I had not to wait long. Within fifteen days I got another job. A teacher at the Hindu School was on leave, so the headmaster called and gave me that job. He also assured me that my post might be permanent.

Still I had some anxiety. Another day, as I was pacing absent-mindedly on the same veranda, someone called me from downstairs. I went down and found that a man had arrived by phaeton with a letter. Reading the letter I learned that Surendranath Banerjee was requesting me to accompany that man to visit him. When I met him, he said: 'I hear you have resigned from Vidyasagar's school. Why don't you join our Ripon College as a professor?' I then joined there as a professor and stayed for five years.²³

Sunday, 23 May 1886 • M went to Kashipur at 8.00 a.m. The Master was suffering from a burning sensation all over his body, so someone had to fan him day and night. M bowed down and then began to fan the Master. After ten minutes Latu relieved M, who went downstairs.

Dr Sarkar had not come to see the Master for a long time, and Dr Datta also was not coming on a regular basis. The attendants and devotees were very concerned.

After supper, when everyone went to bed, M walked alone in the garden-house.

M spent two nights with the Master; at the same time, his wife stayed with Holy Mother. On the morning of 25 May M and his wife left for home.



M's diary is silent from 25 May to 14 August 1886. During this period he must have visited Puri, as in January Sri Ramakrishna had asked

him to go there. But M did not leave Calcutta until May because the Master's condition was serious. M later recalled his visit to Puri:

'Many times the Master told us: "I am Lord Jagannath of Puri." He sent me to Puri and advised me to embrace Jagannath. According to the tradition, one is allowed to embrace Jagannath twice a year—during Snan Yatra and before the chariot festival. I arrived there at the wrong time. I was in a dilemma, because pilgrims were not supposed to embrace the Lord on the altar at that time. But when I was inside the temple, the Master inspired me with an idea. I had some coins and other money in my pocket, which I intentionally dropped on the floor of the dark inner sanctuary of the temple. The priests rushed to pick up that money and in the meantime I jumped onto the altar and embraced Lord Jagannath. Someone saw me and shouted, but I immediately got down and began to circumambulate the Lord. In the dark nobody recognized me.

'The Master asked me to embrace Lord Jagannath and gave me the idea of how to do it, and he also made it easy for me by arousing greed in the minds of the priests. Now I wonder how I did that heroic deed! The Master never went to Puri. He said: "My body will not last if I visit Puri." When I returned from Puri the Master embraced me and said: "Now I have satisfied my desire to embrace Jagannath"' (7.20, 13.205, 14.72).

Sri Ramakrishna sang his swansong. He was nearing the ocean of Satchidananda. The end was rapidly approaching. His feeble body was almost daily consumed in the fire of ecstasy and worn out by the constant gift of himself to his disciples. Till the last moment Sri Ramakrishna gave the final shape to his future Order in Kashipur. He made Narendra the leader of his young disciples and asked him to look after them. During this period some significant events took place that are not in M's diary.

7 or 8 August 1886 • Eight or nine days before his passing away, Sri Ramakrishna asked Yogin to read to him from the Bengali almanac the dates from 25 Shravan—9 August—onwards. Yogin read the events of each day and the positions of the stars until he came to the last day of the Bengali month—16 August—which was Shravan Sankranti, the full moon day. The Master then told him to stop and to put the almanac back in its proper place.²⁴ Thus Sri Ramakrishna selected the date of his departure from this world.

12 or 13 August 1886 • Narendra recalled:

Three or four days before leaving the body, the Master called me alone to his bedside. He asked me to sit before him. Then he looked steadfastly at me and went into samadhi. At that time I really felt that a subtle force, resembling an electric current, was entering my body. I gradually lost outer consciousness. I don't remember how long I was in that condition. When I regained knowledge of the physical world, I found the Master weeping. On questioning him, he answered me affectionately: 'Today I have given you everything I possess—now I am no more than a fakir, a beggar. By the power I have transmitted to you, you will do immense good in the world, and not until it is accomplished will you return.' I feel that power is constantly directing me to this or that work.²⁵

Saturday, 14 August 1886 • Narendra recalled:

It was two days before the Master passed away. His body was about to fall off forever. Sitting at his bedside [probably very early in the morning] I was thinking: 'The Master has said many times that he is an incarnation of God. If he now says in the midst of the throes of death, in this terrible anguish and physical pain, "I am God incarnate", then I will believe.' Immediately he looked up towards me and said: 'He who in the past was born as Rama and Krishna is now living in this very body as Sri Ramakrishna—but

not from your standpoint of Vedanta.' At this I was dumbfounded.²⁶

In the morning Balaram, Ramlal, and an Ayurvedic doctor were present in the Master's room. He went into deep samadhi in front of them. After returning to a normal state he said to Balaram: 'Do you know what I see? It is Brahman. It looks like a calm ocean of light, like a roof of molten sterling silver.'

At noon Rakhal Mukherjee of Baghbazar arrived. The Master went into samadhi again and then he said: 'I see a lake of mercury and I am there as a lead doll.'

Latu told this story: In the early afternoon, there was the big noise of a thunderbolt. Alarmed, Holy Mother and Lakshmi rushed to the Master's room. When the Master saw Lakshmi's frightened face, he said: 'I don't like to see a gloomy face.'

Sunday, 15 August 1886 • Shashi left an account of the Master's last day, as follows:

He [the Master] had been telling us for some time that the vessel floating in the ocean was already two-thirds full of water, and soon the rest would fill up and [it would] plunge into the ocean. ... 'Within me are two persons,' he would declare. 'One is the Divine Mother, and the other is Her devotee. It is the devotee that has been taken ill.' ...

I remember every incident of that last day. Our Master seemed very well and cheerful. ... For supper he had drunk a half glass of payasam [pudding].²⁷

Lakshmi recalled:

He was reclining against a pillow on his bed. There was silence all around, and all were worried about him. Earlier he could not speak, but when Mother and I went to him, he feebly whispered: 'You have come. You see, I feel I am going somewhere, to a distant land through water.' Mother started to cry. Then the Master

said to her: 'Don't worry. You will live as you are living now. As Naren and the others are serving me, so they will also take care of you. Look after Lakshmi and keep her with you. She will manage herself and will not be a burden.'²⁸


At 9.00 p.m. the Master heaved a sigh and went into samadhi. Shashi sent Akshay and Hutko Gopal to give the alarming news to Ramchandra and Girish. Narendra asked everybody to loudly chant 'Hari Om Tat Sat'.

At 11.00 p.m. the Master regained normal consciousness. M entered the room and found the attendants trying to make him sit up so he could eat. The Master said: 'If I sit, I may get dizzy.' M suggested putting some water on his head and fanning him. 'What?' the Master asked. Senior Gopal said: 'M has come.' The Master did not respond. Shashi supported the Master's back with some pillows and made him sit. Some disciples fanned him with palm leaf fans. M began to gently stroke the Master's feet. Someone soaked a piece of cotton and dripped water in the Master's mouth. He said that he was hungry. He then drank two glasses of rice gruel and said: 'I am satisfied. I have no more disease.' Narendra was massaging the Master's feet. The Master repeatedly said to him: 'Take care of these boys.' Narendra asked him to lie down and sleep.

Monday, 16 August 1886 • 'Suddenly at one o'clock [in the morning] he fell towards one side,' Shashi recalled. 'There was a low sound in his throat, and I saw all the hairs of his body stand on end. Narendra quickly laid his [the Master's] feet on a quilt and then ran downstairs as if he could not bear it. A doctor, who was a great devotee and who was feeling his pulse, saw that it had stopped and began to weep aloud.'²⁹ Alarmed, Shashi sent Yogin downstairs with news of the Master's critical condition. Immediately M and others rushed to the Master's room. M recorded: 'Paramahamsadeva was lying on his left—lower

jaw moving, inarticulate sound—his body was still and covered with goose bumps.'

When Holy Mother heard the cry upstairs, she could not restrain herself. She rushed to the Master's room and cried out, 'O Mother Kali, what have I done that you have left me?'³⁰ Baburam, Yogin, and Golap-ma tried to console her and then took her to her room. Afterwards she remained silent.

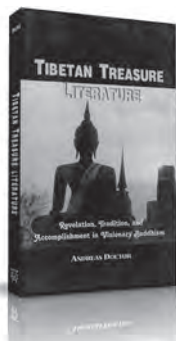
The disciples believed that Sri Ramakrishna was merely in samadhi. Narendra came back into the Master's room and they sat down, some twenty of them, and began chanting: 'Hari Om! Hari Om!' Their belief that the Master was in samadhi was dispelled by Dr Sarkar, who arrived at 1.00 p.m. that afternoon. Before the Master's body was taken to the Kashipur cremation ground, two group photographs were taken at the suggestion of Dr Sarkar, who contributed ten rupees. M appears in both the pictures. 

Notes and References

21. *Sri Ramakrishna and His Divine Play*, 607.
22. *Gospel*, 949.
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24. *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, 484; Swami Gambhirananda, *Bhakta Malika* (Kolkata: Udbodhan, 2005), 112.
25. Sharatchandra Chakravarty, *Swami Shishya Samvad*, 2 vols (Calcutta: Udbodhan, 1340 BE), 2.90; see also Swami Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda, The Yogas and Other Works* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1953), 34.
26. See *Swami Shishya Samvad*, 1.60; also *Vivekananda, The Yogas and Other Works*, 34–5.
27. *God Lived with Them*, 273.
28. Swami Chetanananda, *They Lived with God* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2008), 83–4.
29. *Ramakrishna as We Saw Him*, ed. and trans. Swami Chetanananda (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2008), 158.
30. Swami Chetanananda, *How a Shepherd Boy Became a Saint* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2002), 67.

REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



Tibetan Treasure Literature: Revelation, Tradition, and Accomplishment in Visionary Buddhism

Andreas Doctor

Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U A Bungal-
low Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi
110 007. Website: www.mlb.com.
2009. 245 pp. ₹ 395.

An esoteric communication is sacred and therefore is transmitted without sound symbols, and Buddhist epistemology justifies this impermanence of sound. This method, as followed by the Indian esotericists, had been carried over to Tibet to generate the Treasure revelation practice among masters of old tantra, *rnying rgyud*. Historically this tradition, which appears polemical, entered among esoteric Buddhist practitioners, when Padmasambhava was invited by the Tibetan monarch Thisonde-tsan in the eighth century CE. Padmasambhava left Tibet after consecrating the first Indian Buddhist monastery Samya—*bsam yas* corresponds to *acintya*, imponderable—in the model of Odantapuri Vihara.

The Copper Temple life story of Pemajungne refers to three dimensions of the prospective contents of the Treasure literature—the Buddha lineage, *rgyal ba'i brgyud*, the Vidyadhara lineage, *rig-pa 'dzin pa'l brgyud*, and the *pudgala* lineage, *gan zag gi brgyud*, meant for the common people. These three came within the scope of the Treasure tradition, *gter lugs*. For about five decades several occidental scholars have been engaged in exploring Tibetan traditions from a variety of available resources. These include Eva Dargyay, Janet Gyatso, Per Kvaerne, Michael Aris, Herbert Guenther, Jeffrey Hopkins and others.

The author endeavours to unfold the Tibetan Treasure tradition that has developed into two rubrics: religious Treasure, *chos gter*, and wealth

Treasure, *nor gter*. In other words, some Treasures are for the prosperity of persons or communities. This might have generated a polemical question: whether the teachings as laid down in a particular Treasure, *gter ma*, belong to the discoverer, *gter ston*. Ju Mipham (1846–1912) satirically put a counter question: if a particular Treasure be truly taught by Padmasambhava, as the Copper Temple life story of Pemajungne records, the above question would be silly, as the religious Treasures demanded genuineness on the part of the practitioner, which apparently disappeared in the case of the authors of medieval Tibetan Treasure literature. Mipham's standpoint has been dealt with by the author, who claims the new Treasure with its new hermeneutics to be Mipham's contribution. Mipham appeared in Tibet when the ecumenical views had spread among a section of rationalist monks like Jamgön Kongtrül, Amyang Khyentse Wang-po (1820–92), and others. Their movement to discard monastic sectarianism has been known as Rime, *ris med*, which criticizes the stagnant approaches to bifurcated scriptural debating and catechism.

Tibetan Treasure literature has two separate components attributed to Ju Mipham and his contemporary Chokgyur Dochen Ling-pa (1829–70). The latter was regarded as a revealer of the hidden Treasure of his age and was highly praised by the Nyingma and Kagyu teachers for his contribution to the new Treasure literature.

The indigenous literature—which emerged after the later spread of Buddhism, *phyi dar*, in Tibet from the eleventh century onwards—has developed in multi-pronged dimensions. This literature enriched the medieval Tibetan culture in many respects. The Treasure literature became important in developing the subjectivity that promoted social understanding. However, their authorship, traditionally attributed to Padmasambhava, has been frequently questioned.

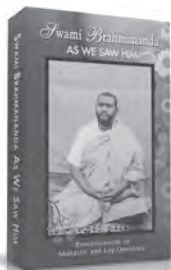
In the Vidyadhara lineage the Vajrakilaya practice, *rdo rje phur ba*, is highly regarded for the development of an adamant vow towards the attainment of non-duality in the superior practice of Advayatantra *gnyis med pa'i rgyud*. The Chokgyur Ling-pa's Treasure, as dealt by the author, is more serious, less satiric, and persuasive enough. In the book two Treasures have been presented in their original Tibetan version along with their English translation: 'The New Treasures of Chokgyur Ling-pa' and 'Practice and Accomplishment of Vajrakilaya'.

The Tibetan and Himalayan digital library uploaded on the Internet preserves the catalogue of the new Treasures, *gter ma gsar ma*, belonging to the Nyingma and Kagyu traditions. The Pali Nikaya literature lays emphasis on the purification of the mind. The Buddhist Sanskrit literature aims at purifying the mental status of the mediocre. And the mantra practice among Buddhists endeavours to cleanse further the psyche of the persons with sharp intellect.

The Treasure texts revealed to Chokgyur Ling-pa on the deep-mind substratum requires greater in-depth study with reference to what has been administered by Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra, and the later Tibetan esoteric masters. The new Treasure discovered by Chokgyur Ling-pa in the nineteenth century belonged to the ecumenical tradition of Tibet. The book thus becomes a mirror for knowing the core of the Treasure tradition with the latest trend prevailing among the Nyingma and the Kagyu. The Treasure literature of Tibet harbours great human values blended with spirituality. This book provides readers with a new approach to developing introspective insight.

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Swami Brahmananda as We Saw Him

Comp. and Ed. Swami
Atmashraddhananda

Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore,
Chennai 600 004. Website: www.sriramakrishnamath.org. 2010.
xii + 588 pp. ₹ 200.

This volume comprises reminiscences by monks and devotees of the profound spiritual personality of Swami Brahmananda, the first president of the Ramakrishna Order. Known as Rakhal Maharaj, Raja Maharaj, or simply Maharaj, he was Sri Ramakrishna's *manasputra*, mind-born son. Though the book records the great saint's life from different perspectives, the swami was so towering that it is hardly possible to bring him completely within the ambit of language and experience, however refined.

Raja Maharaj was one of those rare great souls who in spite of dwelling constantly in high spiritual planes was also grounded in the ordinary things of the world. In the present volume one comes to know of his keen interest in the political situation of the time and things like proper banking methods that would bring better dividends for the Order. As the president of a growing organization, he had a keen insight into the problems faced by monks at all levels. This has found excellent documentation through different reminiscences. Two important qualities very marked in Swami Brahmananda were his habit of talking little and a deep sense of fulfilment. Besides this, almost everyone mentions his genial and robust sense of humour.

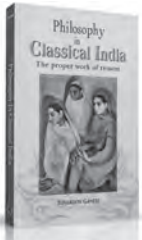
One of the section of the book elucidates the concept of *manasputra* and the link between Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Brahmananda. His autobiographical details, along with the differences in spirituality between Swami Vivekananda and Swami Brahmananda, are also examined. Of course, all are unanimous about his God-intoxication, inward gaze, and insistence on 'faith and regularity' in japa. Distinguished personalities, including statesmen, also show up with their reminiscences, and thus one gets to view the social and intellectual milieu of Bengal and India before independence. All the reminiscers have high regards for the swami's spirituality and concern for the masses.

Apart from the rewarding articles, the book contains an invaluable appendix. The writings and letters of Swami Brahmananda is an added bonus that reflects his erudition, his attitude as a spiritual leader, and the values and perspectives of the Ramakrishna Order. The effect of the whole book on persons trying to understand practical spirituality is very strong. About a hundred il-

illustrations showing Swami Brahmananda in different postures and moods grace the book. The format and the printing is reader friendly—the effort of the editors is evident. The volume owes much to the *Eternal Companion*, which was revised in 1992. *Swami Brahmananda as We Saw Him* will always, to quote from one of the swami's poems, 'set aflame' 'the earth-born hearts' with 'love divine'.

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**Philosophy in Classical India:
The Proper Work of Reason**

Jonardon Ganeri

Motilal Banarasisdas. 2009. vi + 207 pp.
₹ 395.

Western philosophy traces its history to the Greeks, and according to Western philosophers Greek thought was the pinnacle of human achievement. Colonialism, which brought them in touch with Eastern thought, was first dismissed as superstition and moonshine. The main reason for this was the importance given by Eastern philosophies to intuition, extrasensory perception, and experience. However, gradually it began to sink into the minds of Western savants that the East also has contributed vastly to higher human thought. Thus, a movement to study Eastern thought according to its own paradigms was started. Western thought goes more by reason, a Greek contribution. For the East, reason has only a limited role to play, since there are many things in life that cannot be explained by reason alone. The Upanishads have even gone to the extent of declaiming that Truth cannot be realized by reason alone.

This being the case, is there any point in applying the Western paradigm of reason to classical Indian philosophy? This book is an attempt to do so. The author feels that there is still a sizeable part of Eastern thought that is based on reason, and he has tried to examine it in the modern idiom of reason, as it is understood in contemporary Western thought.

There have been recently many attempts in the West to express philosophy in terms of logical syllogisms making use of mathematics. The most famous of them is the classic work by Russell and Whitehead called *Principia Mathematica*, which held sway for quite some time. What is the author looking for in his investigations? He has made it amply clear in the introduction itself that he is seeking for causes as to why Indian thought is so chary in accepting reason as the only method in philosophy. He has tried to do this by examining the tenets of certain branches of Indian philosophy that have accorded a major place to reason.

The book is presented in six chapters; each devoted to a specific school of thought. The branch of Indian philosophy that makes use of reason exclusively is the Nyaya system of Gautama. The author takes it up first. According to him, whatever distrust has been engendered in the minds of Indian philosophers against reason has been due to its wrong application or even its misuse. Vatsyayana, the great logician, identifies Nyaya with a reasoned inquiry. He calls its abuse *Nyaya-bhasa*, and cautions the users of reason against its pitfalls. Textbooks on Indian logic contain ump-teen examples to illustrate this difference. However, Nyaya has its limitations: It cannot override observation or doctrinal teachings. The first chapter is devoted to all these aspects. The author's presentation is, indeed, admirable.

The second chapter takes up the study of Nagarjuna's Madhyamika school of Buddhism. The most celebrated concept of this school is the theory of *shunyata*, emptiness. Buddha did not like polemics in philosophy and felt that mere polemical reasoning or disputations need not lead to the ultimate Reality. Nagarjuna elaborates on this thesis by taking a sceptical attitude, whether reason is of any use at all in reaching the Ultimate. Nothing in this world is independent by itself; everything depends upon something else. Hence, the search for Reality is futile, and intelligence is helpless in this regard. The analysis in this chapter is quite thorough.

The third chapter is devoted to the Vaiseshika system, which comes closest to physical science in its categorization of phenomena. The author proposes a graph-theoretic approach to the study

of categorization. Relationships are described through the use of graphs, which help in placing the categorization in a logical order. This chapter is highly technical and is probably beyond the reach of the common reader.

The next chapter is about the approach of Din-naga, a Buddhist scholar of the fifth century CE. This philosopher believed that it should be possible to represent Reality in as simple a construct as possible. He is of the same mind as Occam, who postulated that Reality could be expressed in a simple manner. The simpler the manner, the closer one is to Reality. This principle has been adopted by science and has governed its growth. The author analyses this approach in detail by making use of the language of mathematical logic. Here also the presentation is masterly and original.

Chapter five concerns the place of reason in Jaina philosophy. The cornerstone of this philosophy is the principle of *syadvada*, according to which nothing definite can be said about anything. Every discussion or debate ends up in this final result: maybe or maybe not! Can one really justify the norms of reason or are they also subject to debate? This is the theme of this chapter.

The last chapter is devoted to the Advaita Ved-anta school. This school makes use of the tenets of logic to establish Reality, but also says that beyond a certain stage even reason proves inadequate. Only scriptural testimony becomes valid beyond that stage. The author appears to favour the approach of Gangesha, one of the founders of Navya-nyaya, neo-nyaya, in which one's beliefs, rules, and actions are brought together into a single body of mutual justification.

Reason has been viewed by many philosophies with suspicion because of the likelihood of its misuse, resulting in destructive polemics, like in *vitandavada*. Otherwise, reason properly used is the first step towards the end result. Whether it can lead to the end result by itself or needs the support of other paradigms is a debatable point. The author has been able to present these debatable issues in this book logically. The language, in some places, appears terse, which is to be expected in such kind of books. Hence, the book is certainly not recommended to novices in the field. But those who are somewhat familiar with

the subject would benefit a great deal due to the new approach adopted in the book. The attempt by the author is, indeed, laudable.

Dr N V C Swamy

Dean of Academic Programmes

Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana

Bengaluru



Enlightenment

Sirshree

Indus Source Books, PO Box 6194,
Malabar Hill PO, Mumbai 400
006. www.indussource.com. 2009.
x + 248 pp. ₹ 199.

This book is an attempt by its author—a self-professed enlightened being—to awaken readers from their mundane robotic lives, shatter their shackles of an ego-driven existence, and lead them to a state of unbroken bliss. The text is loaded with analogies and stories which clarify—some better than others—the topics under discussion, and with more mention of computers and the Internet than of snakes, ropes, and pots there exudes a sense of freshness, possibly reflective of a young target audience. The journey to enlightenment, as conceived by the author, is given full attention from the seed of enquiry to the fruits of liberation, including a brief section on astrology, a chapter devoted to the guru, and sketchy analyses of the four yogas. The central message is simple and clear: Enlightenment is achievable by anyone—right here, right now.

Mark Øvland

Somerset

BOOKS RECEIVED



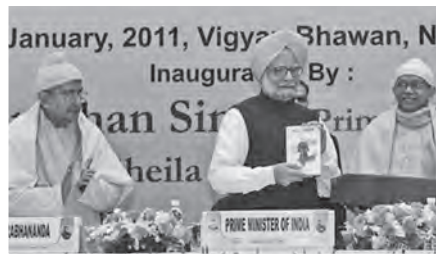
Belur Math Pilgrimage

Comp. and ed. Swami
Asutoshananda

Ramakrishna Math. 2009. vi + 114 pp.
₹ 25.

This small booklet is a useful guide to the holy places associated with Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda.

REPORTS



Commemoration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda

On 12 January 2011 Dr Manmohan Singh, prime minister of India, formally inaugurated at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi, the service programmes the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission would be conducting at different places to commemorate Swami Vivekananda's 150th birth anniversary during the next three years. Swami Prabhananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, gave the welcome address. Dr Manmohan Singh also released two books—*Awakening India* in English and *Bharat Jagaran* in Hindi—brought out by **Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi**, for free distribution to school and college students. Delhi Doordarshan telecast live the programme, a video clip of which is available at <www.belurmam.org/video_pages/150_sv_inauguration.htm>.

Ms Mamata Banerjee, Railway Minister, flagged off at Howrah Railway Station the Vivek Express—a special train with two air-conditioned coaches exhibiting pictures and write-ups on the life and message of Swami Vivekananda—on 12 January. The train will cover important stations of the country during the next three years.

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Kanpur, held a youth convention at the IIT Kanpur on 15 and 16 January.

On 23 January Dr Shrimati Kamla, governor of Gujarat, inaugurated the programmes the **Ramakrishna Ashrama, Rajkot**, would be conducting to commemorate Swamiji's birth anniversary during the next three years.



On 26 January **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ranchi**, launched 'Naren Eye Care Programme' under which free eye check-up and treatment of school children, mainly of rural areas, would be arranged.

Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, organized on 30 January an essay competition on Swami Vivekananda for college students.

Ramakrishna Math, Nagpur, conducted a youth convention on 30 January.

News from Branch Centres

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Kanpur, launched Vivekananda Jnana Vahini, a mobile bookstall, on 16 December 2010.

Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated a kitchen-cum-dining hall block at **Ramakrishna Math, Barasat**, on 3 January and a Sadhan Kutir—a building with four rooms to be used by monks intending to do spiritual practices—at the sub-centre **Ramakrishna Math, Bamunmura**, on 6 January.

On 11 January the Shilpamandira, a unit of **Ramakrishna Mission, Saradapitha**, held a seminar on 'Global Warming and Our Lifestyle' in which Dr R K Pachauri, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and chairman of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, was the chief speaker.

The National Youth Day—12 January—was celebrated with processions, speeches, recitations, cultural competitions, and the like by

many centres. **Ramakrishna Math, Chennai**, organized a public meeting as also quiz and essay competitions on the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda. More than 2 lakh students from all over Tamil Nadu participated.

Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, unveiled a statue of Swami Vivekananda at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Baranagar**, on 12 January.

Achievements

The Blind Boys' Academy of **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur**, won the National Award for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, 2010. Smt Pratibha D Patil, president of India, handed over the award comprising of a citation, a certificate, and a sum of ₹ 1 lakh. The ceremony took place on 3 December 2010, the international day of persons with disabilities, in a function held at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi.

Sri Sanat Haldar, a staff member of **Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar**, won the gold medal in the 35th National Yoga Championship for men in the age group 25-40, organized from 4 to 7 December at Margaon, Goa, under the aegis of the Yoga Federation of India, an alliance affiliated to the Asian Yoga Federation and recognized by the Indian Olympic Association.

A student of the English medium higher secondary school at **Ramakrishna Mission, Chengalpattu**, was adjudged the best player in the sub-junior National Ball Badminton Championship 2010-11.

Sriman Vivek Karmakar, a fourth year student of the five-year integrated MA course in Sanskrit at **Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University, Belur**, won the gold medal in the specialized field of Vedanta at the 48th All-India

Sanskrit Elocution Contest conducted by Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, New Delhi.

Relief

Flood Relief · On 28 and 29 December 2010 **Chennai Math** continued relief operations among flood victims in Tamil Nadu distributing the following items among 4,500 flood-affected families in 72 villages of Kanyakumari Nagapattinam and Thiruvavur districts: 1,500 provision bags (each bag containing 5 kg rice, 500 gm dal, 250 gm coriander powder, 250 gm chilly powder, 100 gm mustard, 100 gm turmeric powder, 100 gm fenugreek, 100 gm tea dust, and 50 gm cumin powder), 3,000 mats, 4,500 blankets, 4,500 saris, 4,500 dhotis, 4,500 towels, 4,500 bags, and 1,500 sets of utensils (each set containing 1 cooking pot, 1 plate, 2 cups, 1 spoon, 1 bucket, and 1 mug).

Winter Relief · 6,728 blankets were distributed to the needy through the following centres: **Aalo**: 1,000; **Belgharia**: 393; **Cooch Behar**: 270; **Dehradun**: 250; **Garbeta**: 150; **Guwahati**: 250; **Kanpur**: 250; **Muzaffarpur**: 250; **Ooty**: 250; **Rahara**: 520; **Ranchi Sanatorium**: 145; **Swami Vivekananda's Ancestral House**: 2,500; **Vrindaban**: 500. Besides, the following centres distributed 183 winter garments: **Chandigarh**: 100; **Rahara**: 35; **Ranchi Sanatorium**: 48.

Distress Relief · The following centres distributed various items to the needy: **Belgharia**: 824 saris, 463 dhotis, 304 lungis, 717 children's garments; **Dehradun**: 140 children's garments, 100 shirts, 130 pants, 40 coats, 30 saris, 5 tarpaulin sheets, 25 bamboos; **Guwahati**: 330 saris, 50 dhotis, 50 steel plates; **Jalpaiguri**: 400 saris; **Rahara**: 199 mosquito nets, 50 saris, 2 lungis, 40 kg coconut oil; **Ranchi Sanatorium**: 150 kg dal, 432 packets of biscuits.

Pilgrim Service · **Seva Pratishthan** organized a round-the-clock medical camp during Makar Sankranti Mela at Sagar Island in South 24-Parganas district from 10 to 16 January. In all, 5,103 patients were treated, out of which 24 received indoor medical care. Besides, 150 blankets and 245 pieces of clothing were distributed to needy pilgrims and monks.

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